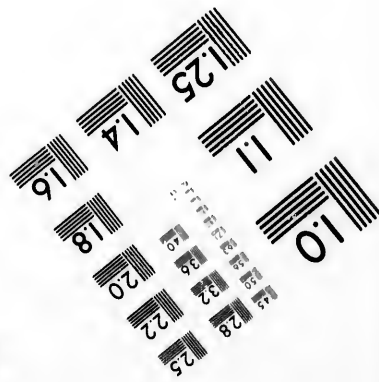
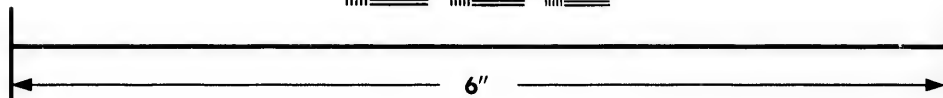
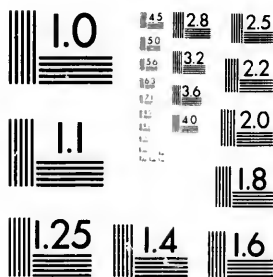


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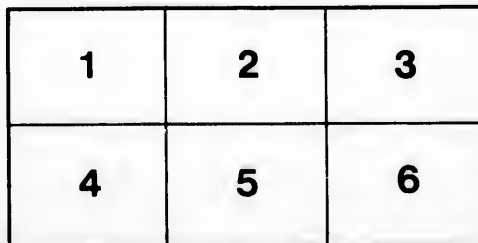
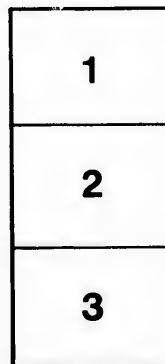
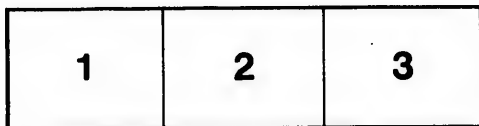
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Frederick Hamilton

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BATTLE FIELD

OF

SEDAN,

And a Fortnight with the German Armies

IN

LORRAINE.

WITH PLAN OF THE BATTLE FIELD OF SEDAN.

BY AN ENGLISH STAFF OFFICER.

CANADIAN EDITION.

TORONTO:

JAMES CAMPBELL & SON.

1871.

Entered according to Act of Provincial Legislature, in the year One Thousand Eight
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JAMES CAMPBELL, PUBLISHER, TORONTO,
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INTRODUCTION.

So much interest attaches itself to the scenes of the late war between France and Germany, that now that peace has removed the difficulties which heretofore beset the traveller in the attempt to reach Sedan or Verdun, Gravelotte, Metz, Spicheren or Saarbrück, there will doubtless be many tourists who will avail themselves of the return of quiet times and summer weather, to drive along the broad French chausseés connecting these historical spots, and spend a night or two in the little "auberges" of the neighbourhood.

To such, an account of a fortnight's visit to these scenes at a time when the traces of the day at Sedan were fresh upon the ground, when Metz and Verdun still held out,—when Prussian Uhlans, as they patrolled the roads, were unhorsed by the Franc-tireur's shot—and the ambulance flag drooped at every few yards from the village windows, may be of interest, and, perhaps, also of use in enabling them to realize more clearly what has gone on around them.

If any one who reads these pages forms from them a more just idea than he had previously held of either French or Germans, or finds them of service in helping him to picture the spots and incidents to which they refer, the writer will feel glad that he has published them.

As he made his journey in company with another officer upon the Staff, whose account of the war "From Sedan to Saarbrück" is now familiar to the English public, he must apologize for two things—first, for the mention of many matters which may perhaps only be of interest to military men, and, secondly, for the necessary similarity in parts between what is related by him, and by his fellow-traveller.

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BATTLE FIELD OF SEDAN.

CHAPTER I.

FROM ENGLAND TO SEDAN.

IN the month of September, 1870, the interest of the war between France and Germany was not, as subsequently, centered around Paris; but was nearly equally distributed between the march of the Prussian King towards the French capital and the opposing hosts of Prince Frederick Charles and Marshal Bazaine around Metz. The journals of the day were filled with the accounts of the great battle of Sedan, which had just been fought. The burning of Bazeilles and other incidents of that battle—the Waterloo of the third French Empire—were in everybody's mouth, and the telegrams each morning announced the progress of the sieges or blockades of Strasbourg, Toul, Montmédy, Mézieres, Verdun, or some other fortified place of more or less importance in the north of France.

It was under these circumstances that we (the writer and a friend), anxious to see something of the stirring military scenes that were going on abroad, and preparatory to leaving by the express train, *en route* via Dover, Ostend and Brussels for Sedan, entered one of the London Clubs. The first thing that met the eye upon entrance was one of those pencilled telegrams upon thin tissue paper, so familiar since the war broke out. This announced that "Cholera and typhus fever were raging in the vicinity of Sedan, and that the air was tainted by the battle-field for twelve miles around."

As we read this, thoughts of abandoning the expedition flashed, we confess, through our minds. We were neither of us

about to travel to the theatre of war from mere curiosity, but were both (I believe) animated with the hope that we should gain by it in professional knowledge. Still even the thirst for this may be carried too far, and had we felt an unshaken faith in the truth of telegrams in general, we should probably not have taken our tickets, as we did, for Ostend that day.

Fortunately we had no such faith, and thought it worth while to verify the report nearer to the locality itself, and a very quick passage across the Channel, and a two hours' railway journey brought us safely to Brussels, where we soon satisfied ourselves that the telegram had no shadow of foundation.

It was necessary to spend a day at Brussels, part of which we passed very pleasantly with the officers of a Belgian Battery of Horse Artillery, the remainder being well filled up in the necessary preparations for our journey to the frontier. A few of the inhabitants of Brussels had gone a day or two after the battle to the field of Sedan (which lies just beyond the Belgian boundary line), and these having found every crust of bread eaten up, and every house and inn full, and every horse and cart employed, had been obliged to travel about hungry and shelterless on foot. Their hardships had so impressed themselves upon others in Brussels, and through them upon us, that we determined to leave all baggage behind at our hotel, and make the purchase of a haversack, which we half filled with provisions, in the portable form of tongues, dried beef, and chocolate, and very glad we afterwards were that we had done so.

A passport, too, (and of recent date), was a *sine quâ non*, and had to be obtained at the British Embassy. We wonder, by the way, if the majority of those who, like ourselves, have travelled long enough to remember old passport days, always filled up the blank space upon the passport left for "Signature of the bearer." An attaché at the Embassy having kindly told us that for want of this precaution two English M.P.'s were suspected by the French at Montmédy of false passports, and were within an ace of being shot as spies, we had the curiosity to refer sub-

sequently to an old passport we had brought with us, and to our horror found that this space had been left blank by us since 1857, and that we had thus for thirteen years been travelling about with a suspicious document. Why this omission, however,—stupid though it may be—should be considered very suspicious, it is difficult to understand, for an erasure would almost certainly be detected, and also for an impostor, who could write, to fill in his own name at leisure would be simple enough.

During the evening we met with an adventure, which we think is, for the sake of human nature, worth relating.

We could not find the way to a certain shop, and so asked a respectable-looking man to direct us to it. He immediately fastened upon us with that eagerness and excess of attention which, if prolonged, invariably becomes a bore, and when, as was the case in this instance, it is accompanied by a long tale of reverse and poverty, generally excites a suspicion of the pureness of its object.

He told us that he and his wife had kept a school for English girls in Paris, but having lost all his pupils in consequence of the war, and not being a Frenchman, had left the city and come to Brussels in search of employment, that (producing a printed card with Hugo Kiechbach on it) he hoped we could recommend him to some one as a teacher of languages, for that he was in real distress, and knew nobody, and was that day actually in want of food. When we found the shop he did not leave us, but insisted upon accompanying us back again (two miles or so) to show the way. We did not want his company, and, in short, it soon became a question with us as to whether we must give this impostor (for so from his garrulity we set him down) something to get rid of him, or submit to his eternal society. Self-interest, and a sense that he had been useful to us—(it was certainly not a feeling of charity)—gained the day, and assuring him that we could on no account bring him further, and raising our hats politely, we explained that we thought, under the peculiar circumstances of his case, he could not be annoyed by

our desiring to be of some pecuniary service to him. To this offer he replied, that he was very grateful to us, but that he could not receive money assistance, and only hoped that we could obtain him pupils. Nothing could persuade him not to see us home; and so see us home he did, refusing to the last all our offers of money, and an invitation to enter the hotel. Now this man certainly gained nothing from us, and we came to the conclusion that by regarding him, though naturally enough, from a suspicious and English point of view, we had done an injustice to human nature in general in his person. Possibly some other suspected foreign impostors have been equally ill-judged, and we should be glad to hear that this one has since got on well in Brussels.

The following morning, with one small haversack filled to its full capacity with provisions and a change of clothes, and with our passports duly signed, and viséd by the French authorities, (the Prussians declined to visé, saying that any permission to travel must be given by the military authorities on the spot), we set off, without uniform, for the Luxembourg Railway Station, and with a ticket in our pockets for Libramont—the point at which it was most convenient to leave the line of rail in order to reach Sedan.

Before taking a final farewell of Brussels, we will mention that we bought there two of Reymann's maps (special *karte*)—one of the country around Sedan, the other of that around Metz. These maps (there are sheets of them for the greater part of Germany and France) were much used by the Prussian officers in 1866, and are specially recommended by Von Moltke himself. For a small and portable map they are very clear and good, giving all details except the more recently constructed railroads, which can be put in at once from any ordinary railway guide. We found them to be invaluable to us.

It was 6.30 a. m. when we left Brussels, and travelling *via* Namûr, we arrived about 11.20 at Libramont, a small unimportant station.

Here we found a diligence, a clumsy, lofty, lumbering affair drawn by three horses, and waiting to take people to Bouillon and Sedan. Not having expected such a luxury, we allowed ourselves to be cut out by a rush of Belgians, who had dashed from the train to secure places, and had accordingly to be content with the best open space we could squeeze into among the trunks and baggage on the roof. As we journeyed on towards Bouillon we had a very uncomfortable time of it, our attention, when not attracted by some object of interest on or near the road, being generally devoted to the question of whether, without danger of falling off, we might change the position of the especial limb which was suffering from cramp. But there *were* many objects of a deep interest to withdraw our thoughts from ourselves. The whole of the scenery between Libramont and Bouillon, consisting of long, undulating hills, cultivated and covered with forests, which lose themselves in rich grassy valleys, is strikingly picturesque, and as we drove along the parallel-lined chausée we soon came upon the first signs of the near presence of war.

Ambulances of all kinds containing wounded soldiers—some but slightly hurt, smoking tranquilly, others looking as if worn out completely by lengthened pain, passed us at frequent intervals. Waggons captured from the French with "*Intendance Militaire*" printed upon them, but now driven by German soldiers, and conveying stores and provisions, covered us with their dust. Sisters of charity raised their small boxes, with "*pour les blessés*" on them, to us as we passed, and received, I remarked, from my fellow-travellers, principally Belgians, liberal contributions, given in a manner, and often accompanied by a word denoting their heartfelt respect for those who asked their alms.

The red cross waving from the various vehicles on the road, or painted conspicuously on their sides, showed how vast was the amount of misery which demanded this stream of carriages for its alleviation; and, as if this were not enough, the picture

of the dark side of war was filled in by the figure of a lady, veiled and in deep mourning, who was being driven from the direction of the field, where she had almost certainly lost some one very dear to her.

After a three hours' drive through a scene like this, we reached Bouillon, and might, had we so chosen it, have gone on at once to Sedan, but even at the loss of a day, we preferred to show our papers to the Belgian commandant and to consult him as to our future movements. As a matter of wise precaution, we had determined beforehand upon always doing this at any town of importance directly after entering it; and to the fact of our having strictly adhered to this rule, to our always seeking rather than avoiding sentries, and to our having a fair knowledge of the language, we attribute it, that we were permitted to go to places and see things which we otherwise certainly could not have visited or seen, and kept clear of those unpleasantnesses of "arrests," and so on, which travellers have so often met with in this war. These may frequently, we believe, be traced either to passports improperly filled in or signed, or to loitering about, as if anxious to avoid observation.

Bouillon is the last town of importance towards the French frontier, and so we went to see Colonel Charmet, the commandant. He was very kind, and gave us a paper requesting every one "to give us assistance;" but, by a curious absence of mind, inserted one of our names, which is an essentially English one, as "Mr. Von Alvensleben." What a German soldier or a French *Franc-tireur* would have thought about an Englishman with such a name we did not know, and we were so anxious about it that we paid a second visit to the commandant to have the error rectified.

On this occasion we asked him if he would advise our endeavouring to see something of the theatre of active hostilities, and thought a visit to it practicable. This he gave a peremptory "No" to; and on one of his *aid-de-camps*, (who having less responsibility and more youth, sympathized evidently with our

wish),—suggesting that he thought it very feasible,—turned upon him with a “How can you, Sir, give such advice as that? How would you as a soldier receive a man in civilian’s clothes in your lines? Would you show him very much; and mightn’t you perhaps shoot him?” “No,” said the aid-de-camp, “I certainly wouldn’t shoot him, provided he had a passport.” “Humph,” replied the Colonel; “well, at all events, you’d send him back again on foot, the way he came.”

This was evidently in the Colonel’s opinion, who was a cavalry officer, nearly as bad a punishment as the shooting, and the aid-de-camp was temporarily silent, but only to follow us afterwards down stairs and tell us not to be frightened by the “No” the chief had given us

It was rather amusing to us while at Bouillon to hear the Belgian villagers speak of the number of prisoners they had made. The disarmed French were looked upon (of course, I mean by the common people) as their own, and not German prisoners. “*Nous avons fait beaucoup de prisonniers*” was their common expression, delivered in tones of great self-satisfaction.

As far as we could discover, no *strong* bias towards either French or Germans existed among the villagers. A great impression seemed to have been made upon them by the way in which the French wounded were “neglected,” (a natural consequence of defeat,) compared with the German wounded. Numbers of the former were spread over Belgium, tended with the greatest kindness by the people—while the latter had almost all been sent (i. e., those who could bear to be moved) to Germany in waggons.

The German successes, and the feeling that the French were more of a burthen to them, had, we suspect, however insensibly, tended to cool the sympathy which was originally, we believe, warmer towards the French. This, however, is only our impression; and, even if it were just, it would merely be attributing to the Belgians a very ordinary weakness of human nature.

We were fortunate in obtaining a room and beds at the

"Hotel de la Poste," the inn where Napoleon stopped on his way as a prisoner towards Cassell.

Deschamps, a Belgian gendarme, on duty at intervals before the inn, told us how he had seen him drive away from the door with his staff, and with "tears upon his cheek," and on our doubting the *literal* truth of this, he asserted it again and again with vehemence, as a plain fact which he would not admit of having questioned.

Deschamps was of great use to us. He showed us the way everywhere, and told us how we should best see the field of Sedan, which he had visited.

One disinterested piece of advice he gave greatly amused us. This was it:—"Only one thing," (with his finger to the side of his nose,) "don't attempt to bring away arms. The Prussians search every one on the frontier, and have said that any one found with arms shall be shot." "If (after a pause) you do want anything of that sort, come quietly to me, for I've a Chassepot and a sword-bayonet concealed that I don't mind selling you."

The Poste inn was comfortable enough as far as rooms went, but the sickeningly nauseous odour from the cattle stables which pervaded it was worse than anything we ever remember to have met with, either in Bohemia or Spain, which is saying a very great deal. One wonders how pestilence is not always rife in places of this kind.

An hour was spent, before it grew dark, in visiting the fine old stronghold of Godfrey de Bouillon, whose ancient towers watch over the opposite side of the Meuse, and within the walls of which we saw some French prisoners walking about—the first we had met with.

After our return, and while we were preparing for bed, an appeal was made to us to come down and explain what some Prussian officers who had just arrived wanted below. The inn people either did not, or would not, understand their wishes, which were to obtain a conveyance, and go on through the night

(having important business) towards Sedan, and when they did at last comprehend them, persisted that it was "impossible," and as a result the Prussians were obliged to sleep on a shake-down of straw until the morning, when they managed to hire a horse and trap. How they must have longed for the power to annihilate the few miles of neutral territory which intervened between them and the French boundary towards Sedan, where their slightest nod was law.

The next morning we were off at 6.30 a. m. (again on the roof of the diligence) towards Sedan, and after a drive along steep-hill-sides clothed with wood, which we should have enjoyed far more upon a less swaying and lofty conveyance, we crossed the Belgian frontier and descended at La Chapelle.

Those who visit the field of Sedan will find it more convenient to descend at La Chapelle than to proceed on to Sedan at once. Between this village and Sedan itself lies much of especial interest, and it is the better plan to see this well upon the road to Sedan, and next day to visit those portions of the field lying in other directions.

As one enters the village of La Chapelle a little house (one of the first on the right hand side) is seen with a sign, on which are printed the words "Lambert, Aubergiste." To this house we had been recommended at Bouillon for a guide, in the person of Lambert *fils*, and as we found him all that had been told us, we recommend him to others.

His lameness, youth and speech reminded us both of the description of Erkman Chatrian's "Conserit" of 1813, and, like the latter, he could walk well in spite of being "*boiteux*."

CHAPTER II.

OUTLINE OF PLAN AND MOVEMENTS OF THE BATTLE OF SEDAN.

BEFORE describing what we saw on the battle field, we may mention that both the plan of operations and events of the battle of Sedan are, for several reasons—but principally on account of the extent of the field, the long turning movements of the Germans, and the numbers engaged—not very easily understood at first sight. The accounts of correspondents and letters from the seat of war, excellent though they may be, can seldom give a full narrative of what goes on beyond their own immediate sphere of observation, and we ourselves found that it was a somewhat difficult matter to obtain, when upon the ground, a satisfactory notion of what had gone on. The ubiquitous Crown Princes of Prussia and Saxony seemed to be continually marching in a circle and fighting at about five different points of the compass at the same time, and the French facing now to their front, and now to their rear, in as puzzling a manner.

Considering that our difficulty may be felt by others, and remembering what a boon a short but connected description of the main design and features of the battle would have been to us at the time, we have thought it worth while to give such a description here (collected from the Prussian official account, a French pamphlet by an officer of the Emperor's staff, and other good sources), and have added a map which will both illustrate this and our wanderings over the field,

A perusal of the remaining pages of this chapter will make, we hope, the whole of the circumstances of the struggle clearer to visitors to Sedan, but those who do not care to understand

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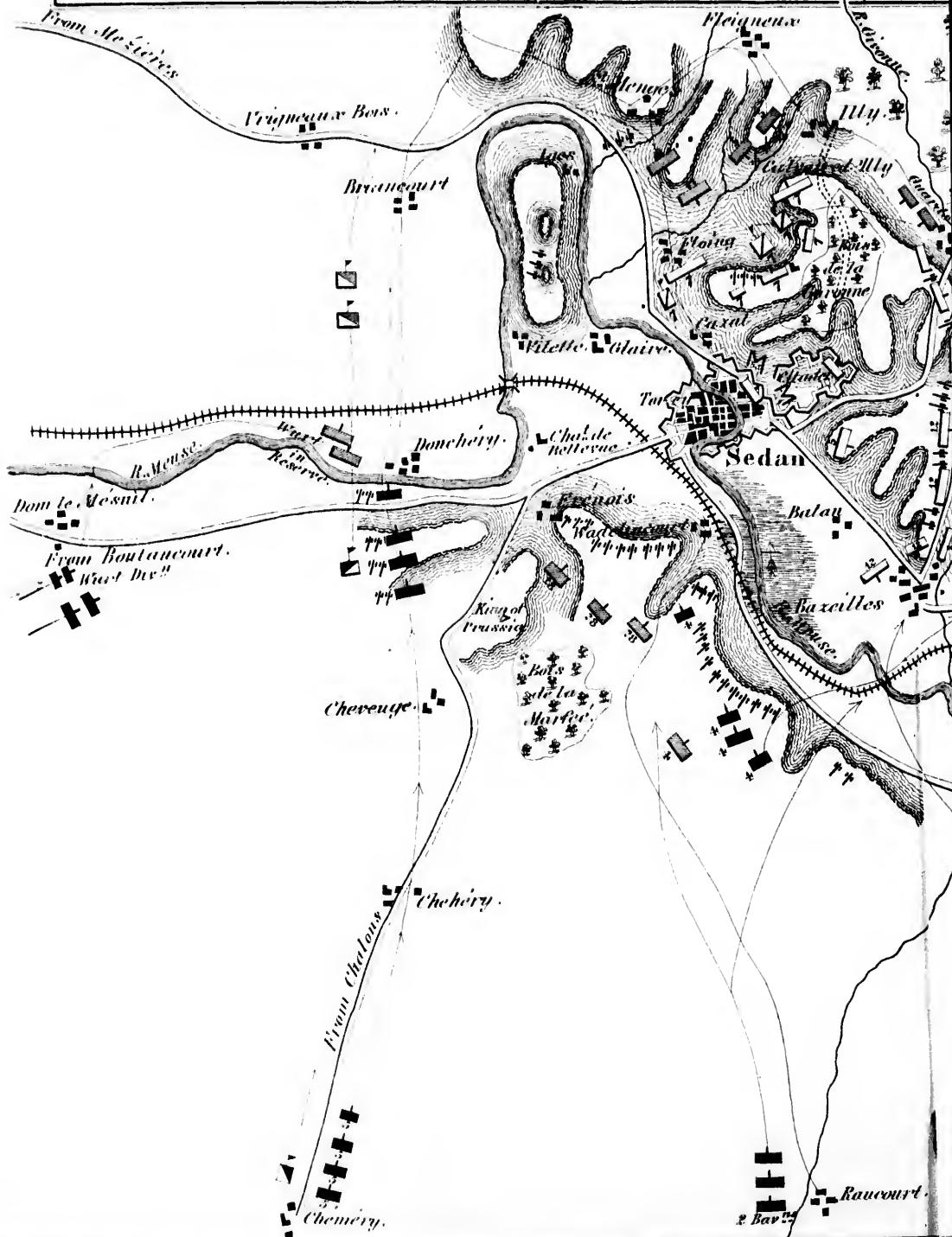
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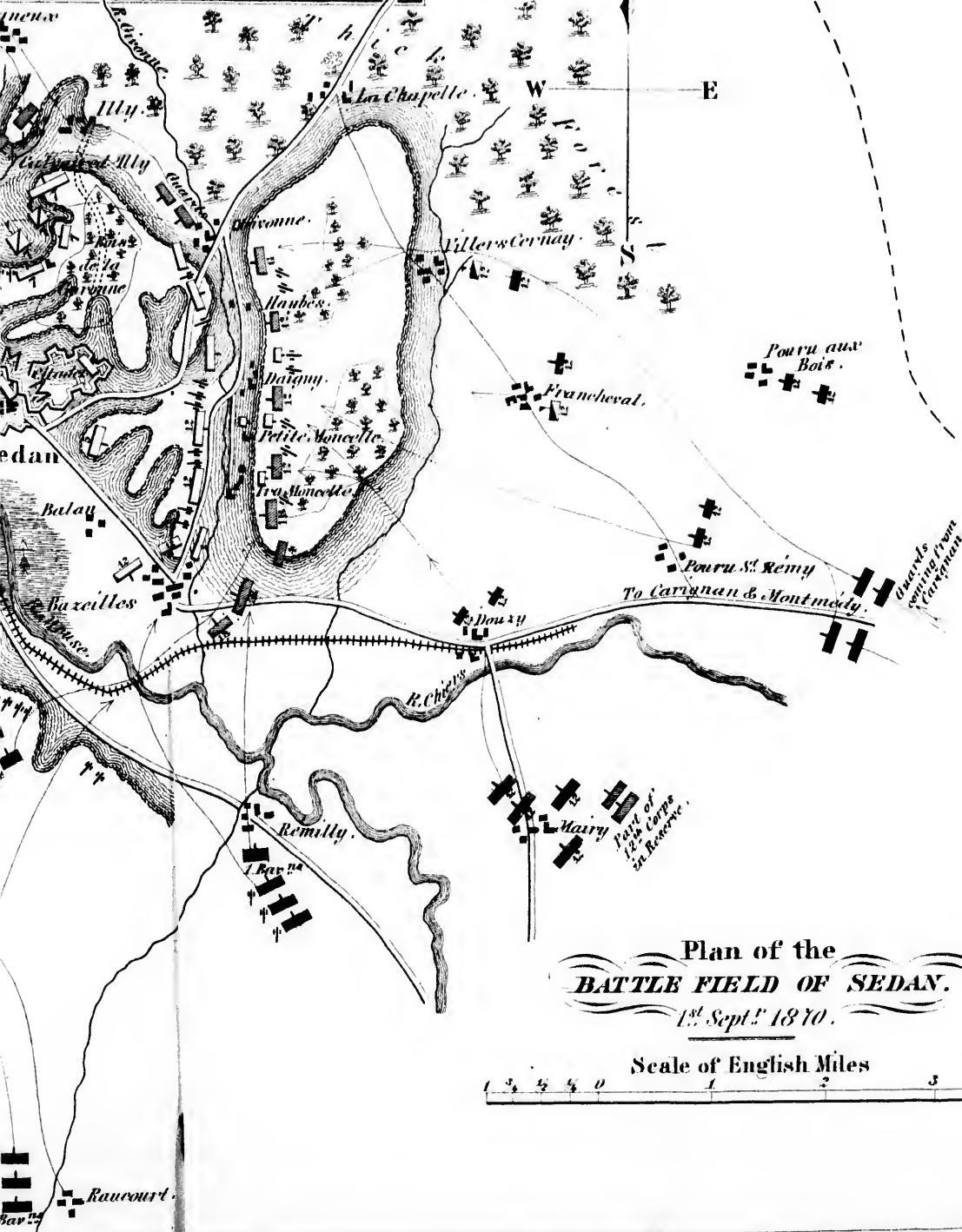
Figures 1, 2, 3, &c. &c. denote the numbers of corps on either sides.
 B-Bavarians G-Guards.

The 1st Position of both Armies is that on the night previous to the Battle (31st Aug.)
 The 2nd German Position is about that assumed by their various corps by 12 noon (1st Sept.)
 The arrow heads & lines indicate the directions in which the several German corps mo



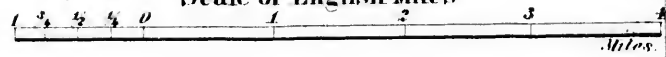
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the Battle (31st Aug.)
corps by 12 noon (1st Sep.)
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Plan of the
BATTLE FIELD OF SEDAN.
 1st Sept. 1870.

Scale of English Miles



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the object of the particular movements of the armies had better skip them, as they must be necessarily somewhat dry.

On the evening of the 30th and morning of the 31st of August, the French army, under Marshal MacMahon, having retreated in some disorder before the Germans and fallen back behind the Meuse, took up the following defensive position, with the determination to make a stand against the enemy:—

The 7th Corps (General Douay) was posted upon the high ground between Floing, near the road to Mézières, and Calvaire d'Ily.

The 1st Corps (General Ducrot) along the ridge between Givonne and La Petite Moncelle, occupying the villages of Givonne, Hayliès, and Daigny, and pushed forward also to the high ground east of them.

The 12th Corps (General Lebrun) from La Petite Moncelle to Bazeilles, occupying the villages of La Petite Moncelle, La Moncelle, and Bazeilles and the eastern height.

The 5th Corps (General de Wimpffen) partly in Sedan and partly on high ground to the east of it.

This position was in many respects strong—*i. e.*, the whole of it was along tolerably commanding ground; the two wings rested upon the Meuse, an unfordable river, which, by means of dams, had been made to overflow and inundate the low ground between Sedan and Bazeilles; Sedan was a fortified town, and the various villages covering the line were capable of a good defence.

Its weak points were that from the heights upon the other side of the Meuse, the line from Bazeilles to Givonne could be enfiladed by artillery; the lines of retreat were very bad, for the army could only fall back towards France by defiling round by the Mézières road, or by crossing the bridges of the Meuse, which river, it can be seen, takes a very awkward bend to the north of Sedan, so that troops retiring across it between Iges and Sedan must traverse it twice. For a defeated army to cross many narrow bridges under fire is a dangerous operation, generally ending in confusion, rout, and disorder.

Sedan, though fortified, was commanded by heights on all sides, and if these were taken it became untenable.

There is no doubt, we imagine, that the French army was at this time in a very despondent state, and by no means in good discipline. The officers probably had no great control over their men, and things were allowed to take their chance. It is, at all events, evident that no sufficient precautions were taken to watch the German movements; the course of the Meuse was not properly guarded, and the enemy's attempt to turn the position not, as far as one can judge, ever considered as a possibility.

The German army extended round the French that evening in a large semi-circle. On the German right the patrols of the 12th Corps were close to Villars Cernay and Francheval, its advanced guards were at Pouru aux Bois, Pouru St. Remy and Douzy, and the bulk of the corps at Mairy (a mile south of Douzy).

The Corps of Guards was behind towards Carignan.

The above troops were under the command of the Crown Prince of Saxony.

The Third German Army, under the Crown Prince of Prussia, continued the semi-circle thus (all being on the left bank of the Meuse):—

1st Bavarian Corps at Remily.

2nd Bavarian Corps at Raucourt, about three miles southwest of this.

5th Corps at Chémery, west of Raucourt.

11th Corps near Douchéry.

Wurtemberg Division at Boutancourt, four miles or so west of Douchéry.

The 4th Corps was near Sedan, and properly belonged to the army of the Crown Prince of Saxony. The 6th was coming round by Attigny and Semuh, some eighteen miles to the southwest of Douchéry, to try and interpose between the enemy and France.

It was thought by the German commanders that the French

might endeavour to make off in the night westward towards Mézières, and in order to intercept them, if they did so, and also in the event of their standing to surround their position, orders were issued for the 11th Corps and the Wurtemberg Division to cross the Meuse in the night, which they did by throwing bridges below Douchéry and at Dom le Mesnil, some two miles or so to the west of it.

At daylight the 11th Corps, followed by the 5th from Chémery, and by some cavalry, were to march northwards towards Briancourt, the Wurtembergers remaining near Douchéry as a reserve. At the same time a general attack was to be made by the rest of the army, as follows :—

The 1st Bavarian Corps was to cross the Meuse by throwing bridges near Remily, and also by passing the railway bridge south-west of Bazeilles—which by some extraordinary oversight on the part of the French was not blown up—and attack Bazeilles and Balan. Part of the 4th Corps and all the Corps Artillery were to assist in this.

The 2nd Bavarian Corps was to move up towards Wadelincourt, south of Sedan and Frénois.

The 12th Corps (leaving a reserve at Mairy) and the Corps of Guards were to move against the French line between Givonne and La Moncelle—the former on the left, connecting itself with the 1st Bavarian Corps. As the Guards were the longest distance off, they could not come into action until some time after the 12th Corps.

From the direction of the Belgian frontier, it can be seen, that if the advance of the Crown Prince with the 11th and 5th Corps was sufficiently quick to intercept the French, they had then no way of escaping from their position, except by breaking through the German army, or retreating into the neutral territory of Belgium, where they would be obliged to lay down their arms, or incur the hostility of England.

The Germans also, it will have been noticed, had reserves at Douchéry and Mairy, near the two main lines along which the

French would desire to break out—*i. e.*, towards Mézières and Carignan.

The force of the German army was double that of the French. It is said that the strength of the former was about 230,000 men and about 600 guns; of the latter 110,000 men and 440 guns.

At daylight the whole of the German army was in motion, and at Bazeilles a very determined opposition was made to the 1st Bavarian Corps. Part of the 2nd came to its assistance, but it was not for several hours that the French were driven out of Bazeilles, and also of Balan, and thrown back towards Sedan. Fighting went on here till the afternoon, and an attempt was made by the French to break through towards Carignan, but in vain.

The 12th Corps had a very hard struggle near Daigny and La Moncelle, but in the end took both these villages, driving the French from their position. La Moncelle fell about 9.30; Daigny about 12 o'clock.

The Corps of Guards arrived (coming through Villars Cernay) in time for part of it to support the fighting towards Daigny and Hayliés. The whole French line from Givonne to La Moncelle being at last forced, 100 guns were got upon the captured ground to play on the enemy, and the Guards (supported by the 12th Corps following them) passed on through Givonne towards Illy to try and encircle the enemy.

In the meantime the 11th Corps, on the extreme German left, followed by the 5th, had reached Briancourt about 7.30 m. a. without meeting the French, and then received the order to move towards St. Menges. It here came into collision with the French, who had thrown out troops to that point, and who retreated after a sharp resistance to the main position on the tongue of land above Floing and the high ground extending from this village towards Illy.

The Crown Prince now prepared to attack this high ground. The 11th Corps took up a position at St. Menges. The 5th moved round by Fleigneux. Artillery from favourable ground

near these villages played for a long time upon the French, and at length, about one p. m., the Prussian infantry advanced across the low intervening ground and stormed the hills, driving the enemy back from the direction of Floing and Illy, through the woods of La Garonne upon Sedan.

The fighting between Illy and Floing was very severe, and several cavalry charges were made along the Spar above Floing, but were immediately repulsed by the breech-loading fire of the Prussian companies.

The ground near Illy having been thus carried, the 5th Corps at 3 o'clock joined with the Guards coming through Givonne, the cavalry moved round to block up the road to Bouillon, and with the exception of a few hundred French, who had previously escaped by the opening between Illy and Givonne into Belgium, the whole of the enemy's army was then surrounded by a well-connected circle of Germans, which drawing closer and closer drove it down in confusion into the fortress of Sedan, where it lay at the mercy of a commanding artillery.

After half an hour's shelling from the guns posted near Wadelincourt and Fresnois, the French Emperor sent out and demanded terms.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIELD OF SEDAN.

As we passed through the village of La Chapelle we saw many convalescent French wounded standing dejectedly near the doors of the houses where they were billeted. One poor fellow was sitting doubled up by the road side with his arm in a sling and his face buried between his knees; another had an empty sleeve, and a third, who had his head swathed round with bandages, made signs to us to show that his chin (a fearful wound, after which one was surprised at the man's living) had been completely torn away.

Through the open door of the church, which (like almost all the churches in the neighbourhood) had been turned into a hospital, the surgeons and nurses of the Ambulance Hollandaise could be seen moving about, dressing and attending to their patients, and on the church walls the splintered stone showed where one or two of the German shells had struck.

Still no damage of great consequence was done to La Chapelle by the German artillery.

Such sights of desperately wounded men fill one with pity, and though nothing tends more readily to your intentions being suspected than to be seen in conversation with prisoners or wounded men, we exchanged a few words with them in the streets, and offering a cigar or two, which was always an acceptable present, passed on through the village towards the scene of the battle. Our guide Lambert, instead of taking us along the main road towards Givonne, branched off a little to the left after passing out of La Chapelle, and led us by a narrow

road to the top of a hill slope in order to point out the spot upon which two Prussian batteries came into action against some few French flying through La Chapelle, and from which the shells which had struck the church and other buildings had been fired.

Though we afterwards saw many artillery positions of this kind, we saw none which struck us more than this. The wheel tracks left by the guns and limbers, the marks of the trail, the tops of a belt of young oak trees cut down by the gunners with axes in order to give a clear range, the exploded friction takes, pieces of wadding, &c., strewn about, and the fresh graves of horses, all enabled one to form a vivid picture of the batteries as they had stood in action upon the brow of the slope a few days before.

From this spot the village of Villars Cernay and Francheval could be seen in the low ground to our left front.

“From Villars Cernay,” said our guide, “the Uhlans were first perceived as they came reconnoitering in that direction the evening before the battle;” and then he went on to tell us how he, in common with most of the neighbouring peasants, fled towards the forest on the approach of the German army,—that a French Franc-tireur fired at him as he was getting over a fence, and that several others were about to do so, when he called out “*La France!*” and managed to stop them just in time. It was a great mistake,” he said, “flying from the villages.” His father, being an old man, chose to remain, and after the battle no damage was done to their house, the Germans only taking what was necessary for eating and drinking; but that when they found a house deserted by its owners and locked up, and thus no help or food to be got from it, they “smashed everything in it and did great damage.”

After leaving the position of this battery we descended to Givonne, passing on our road some scattered French knapsacks and accoutrements, and crossing just before our entrance a little stream which flows through the village towards Bazeilles.

Givonne is a place of some size, built of substantial stone

houses. One or two of them had been burnt to the ground by shells, but this seemed to have been the extent of the damage it had suffered.

A few Prussian infantry guarding some captured French wag-gons were in the streets, and the usual village life and bustle (it was market day) was going on around.

Recrossing the stream, we went on through Hayliés, which is a suburb of Givonne, and consists of a collection of manufactories, to Daigny, and from Daigny to La Moncelle. Up to this point we had seen comparatively few of the destructive traces of the battle, which, however, soon now became thick.

To eyes unaccustomed to the wreck of villages in war, the ruins of La Moncelle would be very striking. At this place there was a severe contest, and its streets as we passed through bore marks of it in rifle bullets, cartridges, French knapsacks, Prussian infantry helmets, water-bottles, and various other *debris* of the fight. Only two or three of its houses were left standing, the rest having been turned into mere blackened shells by the artillery fire of the contending troops. In the middle of the high road lay a large piece of a Prussian shell, and not far from it a soldier's postal ticket pierced by a bullet and stained with blood.

These tickets, called "*Feld correspondentz-karte*," are issued to all soldiers, that they may write upon them home to their friends, and are very similar to our postal cards, the idea of which must have been borrowed from them.

In one of the most exposed parts of the village, and in the very midst of burnt and ruined houses, stands the church, untouched by a single bullet. In future ages the interposition of its patron saint ought, if the days are not too sceptical, to be believed in here, for nothing short of a miracle can, indeed, fairly account for its marvellous escape.

As one leaves La Moncelle, the road runs close to the little stream we have spoken of as flowing through Givonne to Bazailles, and on each side of it the ground, smooth and cultivated, rises up to a much higher level by a tolerably gradual slope.

We mounted the height to our left hand (*i. e.*, to the east of La Moncelle), and walked along it to the village of Bazeilles. The remains of fires, with pieces of biscuit and pork scattered near them, and collections of broken bottles, most probably out of the pillaged wine caves of Bazeilles, showed that this plain had been the site of a bivouac. Lambert told us that it was a bivouac of Franc-tireurs; but we observed, generally, that everything either said, done, or suffered, by the French in the war, was always said to have been said, done, or suffered, by a Franc-tireur. They are the pet heroes of the villagers of France. The mixture of French and Prussian accoutrements, and French and Prussian cartridges (*chassepot*, needle-gun and *tabatière*), the carcasses of horses still unburied, and the graves of men (marked simply by two little boughs tied together in the shape of a cross), showed also that the struggle for this part of the position was fierce and obstinate. Close to Bazeilles, on the banks of the little stream, we came upon a heap of *mitrailleuse* cartridge holders; each holder—square in shape—was of tin, covered with a sort of waterproof canvas, and with receptacles for twenty-five cartridges. The cartridges are turned by one motion out of these cases on to a plate opening into the breech of the gun, and then shut into the barrel.

Although we had never before seen these holders, there was no mistaking what they were, by any one who had read the description of the engine with which Napoleon III. was going to overwhelm Germany.

Describing the assault of the ridge between Bazeilles and Daigny, the Prussian official account says:—"A very violent artillery and *mitrailleuse* fire led in the fight. The French took the offensive. General and vehement assaults were repulsed; at length the 23rd Division (of the 12th Corps) came up and took La Moncelle."

After spending some little time upon this ground, we entered what had once been the village of Bazeilles. So much has been written about the burning of this village—some of the houses of

which were still smouldering—that it is unnecessary to describe it here. We can only say that nothing could exceed the completeness of the desolation and destruction of the spot.

Where some 3,000 inhabitants were living in their well-built stone houses, nothing remains but a collection of skeleton walls and heaps of rubbish. Probably some 400 or more houses were destroyed, whether legitimately, according to the stern necessity of war, and in the hope of, by a terrible example, saving bloodshed in the end, or whether in the unjustifiable excess of cruelty, the verdict of history has yet to settle. As we passed into the village, a little mound of earth, in which was placed a stick with a peasant's cap upon it, was seen. Two or three of the inhabitants, who escaped before the battle, still lingered among the scenes of their ruin, searching amidst the debris, and pouring out their grief and anger (there were no Prussians near) aloud. The little cross, they said, marked the place where an inhabitant trying to escape had been shot; that some "Franc-tireurs" (and not the inhabitants) had fired from the cellar rooms of the houses upon the Bavarian troops, and that on this account the village was set on fire, and every person, including innocent villagers, endeavoring to escape from it, was shot; and not this only, but that the day after the battle, the Bavarians returned to burn down the few remaining houses still standing, and led out several more peasants to be shot.

One woman with a child in her arms, which was crying (for want of food, she told us), and who brought us a cup of water out of the ruins of her cottage, was loud in her lamentations. "My husband," she said, giving a convulsive rock to still her child, "was an inoffensive villager, but was seized in the street by a Bavarian officer, who would have shot him had he not confessed where some stores in the village lay concealed; for this his life was spared, but we are all ruined, all ruined."

Poor people, they were certainly in this battle passed under the harrow without mercy, and if future visitors to the spot are pestered beyond endurance—as from certain signs of our visit,

even at the short interval after the battle, we believe they may be—by begging little boys holding boxes for “les malheureux de Bazeilles,” let them, in memory of this certain truth, keep their patience, and perhaps give a few half-pence to them, if they are able.

To look upon the other side of the question, and in spite of the sufferings of the inhabitants of Bazeilles, it is not, we must remember, upon their statement alone that the guilt or otherwise of the burning of the village must be determined.

Many German officers, with whom we subsequently conversed, assured us that the inhabitants of Bazeilles, women as well as men, showed a vindictiveness that was most outrageously inhuman, not only shooting down the ambulance men and several Bavarian soldiers, but attempting to drag the wounded into the burning houses; and a Prussian surgeon told us that if we wished we might interrogate a Bavarian officer under his hands, and able to speak, but almost at the point of death, from the effect of boiling oil which had been thrown upon him—this, of course, we did not do. The shooting of some peasants was admitted by some German officers, the firing the houses on the second day denied.

The *Franc-tireur*, or free rifleman, is a description of soldier with whom we never met, but the Germans describe him as being frequently dressed in an ordinary villager's blouse, with a belt sometimes over, but as often underneath it, and, in fact, as bearing no sort of certain mark of being anything but a peasant carrying a gun.

This renders it impossible, they say, for their own safety, to treat them as soldiers; as, if they did so, every armed peasant would call himself a *Franc-tireur*. As I have before said, we never met them; but from the German accounts they do not, at least did not at the beginning of the war, seem to correspond in any way (as I have seen urged occasionally) to citizens fighting in uniform, as English Volunteers would for their homes.

One can understand how these *Franc-tireurs*, firing side by

side with some of the peasants in the houses, may have helped to bring death and ruin upon innocent men.

All these points will be more fully and justly appreciated in the future ; but one opinion, we should think, must always be entertained, and that is, that if the provocation to the Bavarians was great, their revenge was a relentless and bloody one.

We noticed that the village of Bazeilles was not in any way prepared for defence by loopholing or cutting communications from house to house—*i. e.*, there were no signs of this on the skeleton walls. The defenders must have fired from doors and windows, and those who escaped did so, our guide said, by the back gardens and the fields along the Meuse. Marks of rifle-bullets were thick upon some of the faces of the houses still left standing, showing that the infantry fire must have been hot in the streets.

From Bazeilles we walked towards Balan, a neighbouring village and a sort of suburb of Sedan. The road between these two places, which is bounded by poplar trees, many of which were torn by shot, passes over an open country and is raised above the adjoining fields. On the right stretches the gently undulating plain west of La Moncelle, over which many of the retreating French were driven in rout, (and which we turned off to examine), and on the left large fields slope down towards the Meuse. These had been inundated to a great extent by the damming of the Meuse, which gave the country something the appearance of a lake. Near Balan, and close against the right bank of the road, we came again upon little heaps of Mitrailleur cartridge-holders, showing that here (where the raised road gave good natural cover) had been the position of some of these engines, the continuous growling of which in this direction is spoken of by most witnesses of the battle. Evidently, from the position of these Mitrailleurs, they had been directed against men who were attacking, after having come through Bazeilles, or round it, on the west. The inundated part of the Meuse could not be crossed.

Balan does not seem to have suffered much from the battle ; but some iron shutters on a house on the right hand side as you enter had been struck and scored in long ridges by very many rifle-bullets. The ambulance flag hung out of several of the windows in Balan, and at the entrance of the village, close to the house with the scored shutters, was a large collection of arms taken on the field.

From Balan to Sedan is but a short distance, and there is not much of interest to detain one on the road.

We entered Sedan about sunset, having had full time, since we left La Chapelle in the morning, to examine very minutely every feature of the ground over which we passed. In fact, it would have been quite possible for us to have reached Sedan two or three hours earlier.

The appearance of Sedan very much surprised us. We had heard an account of its having been made a mass of ruins in the battle ; and we confess that we had been, before seeing it, completely ignorant of its size and importance.

We were, therefore, a good deal astonished to find ourselves, after crossing the drawbridge of the fortifications and passing the German guard (who did not stop or question us) in the midst of a large town, with no marks of shot or shell visible in its streets, with well-lighted shops of many kinds—butchers' shops, with meat hanging up before the doors, and giving signs of plenty of food ; confectioners' shops, libraries, hotels, restaurants—in short, all the usual shops lit up as brightly as one sees them on a quiet evening in peaceful times in some flourishing town.

Prussian soldiers were strolling through the streets, or making their purchases as quietly, and with as little appearance of being recent intruders as could well be conceived ; and it was with difficulty, in spite of the presence of a few French wounded and the now familiar ambulance flag, that we could realize that near this town had been fought a few days previously one of the greatest battles of history, where an empire fell and 80,000 men had laid down their arms.

Certain notices placarded in the streets soon showed us, however, that we were far from being in an ordinarily governed town. Such were these:—

“Sedan is proclaimed in a state of siege.”

“On any alarm in the night, no inhabitant, unless with authorization of the commandant, is to appear in the streets, and all are at once to light up their windows.”

“The captured and loaded arms will be fired off at 7 o'clock every evening in the fosse, so that this firing need cause no alarm.”

Many other notices like these, giving instructions to the inhabitants and laying down pains and penalties, from fines up to death, met our eye, posted up sometimes, as if in irony, next to older proclamations still left standing, and which narrated some glorious but imaginary victory of the armies of MacMahon or Bazaine, and after which latter a satirical note of admiration in pencil could sometimes be detected.

Going up to the ramparts to view the surrounding country, we asked a few questions of a German sentry who, with three medals on his breast, was pacing slowly up and down, and who seemed nothing loath to talk to us. It was very tiresome (“*Sehr langweilig*”) being there, he said, and for his part he longed to get home to his family; for that their position in a conquered town was unpleasant for them and very unpleasant for Sedan.

This we could easily understand, for Sedan was, in fact, under martial law and at the mercy of the commandant of the 3,000 or so of Prussian soldiers of the Landwehr who formed its small garrison, and no one was admitted in or out of its gates after a certain hour. We tried in vain to obtain a lodging in the larger inns or hotels, and at last in despair attempted a little auberge in the Place Turenne, called “*L'Auberge de la Croix de Malte*,” whose outside was not inviting. But one of those surprises so often met with in travelling was in store for us here, for we were made most comfortable inside, and found the people of the

auberge (new arrivals in Sedan and full of apologies for their shortcomings), so civil and attentive, that we rejoiced over our rejection at the larger inns, and registered a vow that if we ever again came to Sedan we would go in gratitude to the "Croix de Malte."

The next morning we reported ourselves to the Commandant, who was out, but whose Aide-de-Camp gave us every information in his power, and at about eleven o'clock we set off with a guide to see the guns captured from the French, as well as those parts of the battle field we had not as yet visited.

Going out from the town towards the suburb of Torey, we crossed, by a stone bridge, the canal whose overflowing waters had caused the inundation we spoke of near Balan and Bazeilles, and which extended slightly to this point also. Just inside the outer ramparts we came upon a trophy of war, I suppose hardly rivalled in history, consisting of some 400 field guns and 70 mitrailleurs, packed close together in a large open space. If it is considered that, in addition to this, some 100,000 Chassepots are said to have fallen into the Germans' hands, the material gain of their triumph in this war (and this is saying nothing of what has since been taken at Metz) becomes apparent.

The German officers with whom we conversed all spoke in praise of the Chassepot, as compared with their own needle-gun, though its bullet does not smash and kill so much. Its range is several hundred yards greater, a more important point, and it was not, they said, very improbable that they would, having taken such a multitude of these weapons in the war, serve them out to their own army for future use.

The mitrailleur, or the French Montigny weapon, they have a poor opinion of, preferring, if they are obliged to take an engine of its size (that of an ordinary field gun and drawn like it by horses) out with them, to take a field gun at once, which, under four circumstances out of five, in a campaign is far more useful.

The mitrailleur they thought would be valuable for raking narrow roads or bridges and for protecting the ditches of

fortresses, but its bullets are thrown in too great a shower together at close ranges, and thus are wasted—one man who is killed being probably pierced by several balls.

As we went out to, and returned from, this sight, waggons filled with rifles, collected on the field, kept passing us on the road, and we saw boys and men fishing for arms with poles and grappling irons in the canal and over the inundated ground on both sides of the bridge, now bringing up a sword, now a rifle, now a knapsack, and so on. The French soldiers had evidently thrown these into the water in their anger and rage when they were ordered to lay them down and capitulate.

Having seen the captured cannon, we retraced our steps, and issued this time from Sedan by the road leading towards Caval and Floing. Just after leaving the gates we were rather disagreeably confronted by a notice to the effect that any one found wandering on the field of battle "*sans but*" (*i. e.*, without some definite object), would be very heavily fined; but our guide told us that this was not enforced, and as we saw several idlers on the field afterwards, we imagine it was not.

We followed the road until close to the village of Floing, which lies almost hidden from view behind a spur or tongue of land stretching down from the wood of La Garonne towards the village and overhanging it steeply.

We then turned off and ascended this spur (which we may call the Floing spur), as we knew that upon it one of the most severe struggles of the battle had gone on. The first thing which struck us on mounting a little way up it was the position (indicated by tracks upon the ground, and by the half-buried carcasses of horses, their hoofs projecting from the earth) of two French batteries, evidently the two alluded to by the War Correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, whose account of the battle we had read, as having been silenced by a Bavarian battery from a hill near the village of La Villette. It was clear that these batteries, fully exposed as they were upon the hill slope, would be at a great disadvantage in a duel with one pro-

perly concealed behind sloping ground ; and our first thought was, why this French battery had not moved further back, so as to be on the reverse side of the ridge and sheltered by the crest ?

It was in trying to find a reason for this, that we first became aware of how thoroughly the French on this spur were surrounded by the Germans on the morning of the 1st September ; for on moving over to the reverse, or northern side, of the spur, we found that this side also had been occupied by batteries—one placed immediately over the village of Floing and directed towards the village of St. Menges, about a mile off, and so situated that while it was defiladed by a steep wall-like dip in the ground close behind it from the reverse fire of the German guns near La Villette, it was from this circumstance—as the shells would strike and burst in the ground behind—placed in a sort of shell trap. Also, from the downward slope of the ground, the gunners must have been fully exposed to the German batteries with which they were directly contending, and which had been drawn up behind a little Mamelon near the corner of a wood in the direction of St. Menges (a little south of it.) This Mamelon is described in some accounts as the “Mamelon of Floing.” The earth torn up by shells, and two disabled gun-waggons left upon the ground, pierced and splintered, gave evidence of the sharp artillery duel at this point, which had been kept up from eleven until one o’clock.

The other battery was for mitrailleurs, six in number, a sort of rough gun pit having been dug for each mitrailleux.

The front of the battery faced towards the low and open ground beneath, in a direction between St. Menges and Illy, the earth being thrown up high on the left side of the pit, evidently to act as a traverse against flanking artillery fire from the direction of La Villette.

A wounded, melancholy-looking French soldier, who having lost his arm on this hill, had come again as soon as he could move about to see the spot where he had been struck down,

pointed out to us the positions of the German batteries, and gave us some interesting particulars of the fight at this point. He, in common with all the French whom we spoke to, threw great blame upon their leaders, accusing them of "treason," and saying that all the superior officers were inefficient. "One of our generals, he said, "was asleep in that little cottage over there, when they told him that the Prussians were moving round so as to enclose us; but he took no notice of it, and said it was all nonsense." "We heard a gun fired by the Prussians about 1.30 a. m., which was evidently the signal for their troops to march. There was no attempt to stop the enemy in crossing the Meuse, and no knowledge of the country. Our officers did nothing, and we were completely surprised."

The assertion as to treason is, we may confidently decide, groundless, and is too readily resorted to by the French; but the fact of the railway bridge over the Meuse, near Bazeilles, by which the Bavarians crossed, not having been destroyed is true, and the efforts which might have been made to retard the enemy in his passage of the river were certainly not made.

This wounded soldier said that he had remained three days lying upon the field, and mentioned also that some of the troops who fought in the battle had been taken from Floing as conscripts only two weeks before, and had no knowledge of their drill. He was soon joined by two or three other Frenchmen. "Our captain," said one, (an artilleryman belonging to the mitrailleuse battery), "wouldn't believe that the troops marching round us were Prussians, and several times ordered us to cease fire, otherwise they would never have taken the hill." "I saw them go down there," pointing to some little mounds of earth (graves) about 900 yards off in the valley, "by two hundred at a time," (evidently he exaggerated a little from pride in his weapon), "under the discharge of the battery, and up to ten o'clock we had good hopes (*bonne esperance*) that they would be beaten."

While talking to these soldiers and examining the position of

this Floing spur with regard to the surrounding guns of the Germans, we saw that it would have been impossible for the French batteries to have been so placed upon it as to have been sheltered from reverse or enfilade fire. They were, in fact, taken at a heavy disadvantage.

After moving to the extreme edge of the spur, so as to see more closely the village of Floing (but without going down to it, as it had not suffered much in the battle), we walked up the spur in the direction of the woods at its summit, and past the little isolated red brick cottage where the French soldier said his general had lain asleep, our attention being turned more to the northern (or left hand) side, up which the German troops of the 11th Corps came to the assault. The slope is here of about 15° , smooth in most parts, except close above Floing, where it is broken and covered with bushes. Infantry could ascend it without difficulty, but to carry it under fire, even after its defenders had been shaken by a two hours' cannonading, must have required great pluck and determination.

Along the greater part of the ridge no attempt at intrenchments had been made by the French; but beyond the little red cottage—where the crest of the hill bends in the direction of Illy, so that from behind it a flanking fire can be brought across the northern slope up which the Germans attacked—commenced a line of entrenchment, which ran away in this direction for a distance of apparently some 500 yards.

It was the only example of shelter trench which we saw at Sedan. A well-directed army in good spirits could certainly have done far more, even in the short time, to strengthen this naturally strong position (witness what was done by Meade's army on the night of the 1st June, 1863, before Gettysburg). It was very much of the form of the ordinary four feet wide and two feet deep shelter trench which the infantry soldiers of the English army are now taught to construct. Its defenders had evidently been shelled heavily, as numerous pieces of shell were met with here. Near the top of the Floing spur, and not

very far from the woods, we saw several large gun pits, where the Germans had placed their guns of position, on the morning after the battle, in readiness to play upon the French in Sedan if their terms were not agreed to.

In the midst of all these signs of war one could see the first steps towards their obliteration, and the return to the old natural look of times of peace.

Sheep were cropping the grass near the shelter trench, and men were already at work filling in this and the gun pits, so that soon all trace of them will have passed away. We may mention that in no part of the field did we see batteries with embrasures, only hastily constructed sort of square pits, over the edge of which the guns fired "en barbette."

Before ending our remarks upon what we saw upon the Floing spur, we ought to say that all along it, where the infantry fighting as well as the cavalry charges of the French had taken place, the ground was covered with the *debris* of the fight. The Prussian account says:—"At length the infantry took the ground about Floing. The enemy repeatedly charged it with cavalry. These charges, undertaken with wonderful bravery, in spite of the difficulty of the ground, were shattered and broken by the firmness of the infantry."

Cooking utensils pierced with bullets, packets of cartridges, helmets, accoutrements, soldiers' livrets (or small books), postal cards and letters, blown about by the wind, strewed the slope, and the graves of horses were frequent.

All the knapsacks that were met with in this day's wanderings were French.

The Germans had evidently collected all their own, and picked off also the brass ornaments of the helmets, leaving the leather portion (sodden and shapeless from wet, and often cut and disfigured) lying about the field.

Every French knapsack had been pillaged, and almost every cartridge emptied of its bullet, the powder being left and the lead gone. "*Rien de tout—tout volé. Rien de tout—tout*

volé!" was the constant and disappointed exclamation of our peasant guide, as with an irresistible impulse, which nothing could check (and which showed a good deal of the marauder in his composition) he kept turning over the cowhide packs with his long stick and heavy boots.

The spur descends at a gentle inclination from the wood above, and, except that it is somewhat rough, would not be unfavourable for the charge straight down it of a small body of cavalry; but on account of the narrowness of the spur, except high up near the wood, no extended line of horse could charge down it, and the slopes on either side are very unfavourable.

We picked up and read some of the letters blown about the field, partly with the hope that we might afterwards trace the writers of them, and return the letters to their families if any seemed of especial interest, and partly from curiosity. Generally, these letters alluded to accounts that had been received from the soldiers they were written to, of their despondency and misery.

"Tell your companions," said one, "that they must not be discouraged; our district is even now raising another army, and we will drive the Prussians out of the country." The following extracts we give in the original tongue, as well as in English:—

"Nous avons reçu ta lettre, que nous a appris que tu es bien malheureux. Nous t'envoyons 10 francs pour diminuer un peu ta misère. Recommande toi toujours à la sainte Vierge. Elle te protégera pour nous. Nous le prions tous les jours.

"Les détails des fatigues que tu endures me poignent le cœur. Que le grand Dieu du ciel daigne rejeter loin de toi, mon fils, les mauvais coups qui se preparent."

"We have received your letter, from which we have learnt that you are very unhappy. We send you 10 francs to lessen slightly your wretchedness. Commend yourself always to the holy Virgin. She will protect you for us. Day by day we pray that it may be so.

"The particulars of the hardships that you endure pierce my

heart. May the great God of heaven deign to keep far from you, my son, the evils that are in store."

After reaching the top of the spur, we passed straight on into a thick copse of beech and underwood, and just before we entered it came across a quantity of scattered music sheets, showing where a French band had lightened itself of the burden before plunging into the wood.

The "*Rhine Valse*" was marked on one of those we picked up. We issued from this wood close to a farm house, near which MacMahon is said to have been wounded.

A road towards Sedan runs past it, bounded on one side by a largish ditch, so that the story of the Marshal having been "left wounded in a road-side" after vain attempts to retrieve his fortunes, may be possibly founded upon fact. From this house we walked up the road in a northerly direction (away from Sedan), and soon came to a point where the wood on our left ceased, an open valley succeeding to it, while the wood ran on our right.

Along the valley a strong body of the French had evidently retreated, from the number of the knapsacks (principally belonging to the marines) strewing the ground.

It is the natural line which the defenders of the shelter trench, which we have alluded to, would have taken in endeavouring to escape towards Belgium; and from the little heaps of mitrailleuse cartridge holders, it was evident that at all events one or two mitrailleurs had here come into action repeatedly—and often, owing to the undulations of the ground, at necessarily very short ranges (say 200 yards or so)—to try and stem the torrent of the pursuit.

The edges of the wood on the right bore marks of the fight in broken and torn branches, but the interior would have been too thick for anything but a close hand to hand struggle, which we imagine there was no halt made for by the retreating troops.

After following the boundary of the wood for some distance, we entered it, passing by a mound of earth, from the surface of

which glittered something, which our guide, who was in advance, stooped and seized, drawing out, before we could stay his hand, a sword bayonet, and pulling up its sheath and belt half out of the soil. Here then, just where he fell—on the very path itself—and with his accoutrements untouched, a few shovelful of earth had been thrown over the remains of some French soldier, whose dream in the morning had been perhaps of the glorious march to the Rhine, or of the marshal's baton, which, by tradition, his own and all the pillaged knapsacks of his companions, lying on this lost battle-field, held.

We replaced the sword, and after walking a few yards further, came into some open ground, where troops had bivouacked a very few days previously, and close to which stood the remains of a large, better class of country house or chateau, burnt to the ground.

Near it, several hundreds of the French, we were told, had laid down their arms; and in evidence of this, outside its walls we saw great heaps of cartridges, and many sets of accoutrements and knapsacks placed together in regular rows beside each other.

The destruction of this chateau was a striking evidence of the complete ruin caused by war. Walls burnt and blackened, furniture scattered in the yard (probably for defence) and destroyed—shrubberies trampled down, flower-beds torn up, fountains and statues broken and overturned—spoke mutely to the curse which lights upon those about whose fields and houses is fought out a deadly struggle such as this.

From the chateau we returned to Sedan by the high road leading past the citadel, which our guide said, on the evening of the battle, was strewn with horses and men, as the French fugitives (who, cut off from Belgium, endeavoured to get down it into Sedan) were taken at long range in front by the Prussian artillery from the heights far away in the direction of Wadelincourt, as well as fired into from the rear. The sides of this road were still thickly strewn with the signs of the rout.

We had now seen the field of battle well from the French positions, but wishing still to view it as it must have appeared to

the Germans, we went out again next morning through Torey, and so up to the height, about some two-and-a-half miles off, between the wood of La Marfée and the chateau of Donchéry, and above the village of Cheveuge, upon which, on a small potato field, the King of Prussia stood during the battle, and where he received the letter of Napoleon, saying, that unable to find death at the head of his army, he delivered up his sword.

The view from this hill is very extended, taking in a great portion of the entire field of battle, and, with the exception of parts towards and beyond Bazeilles and the northern slope of the Floing spur, we could trace from it with a glass almost all our wanderings of the previous days. Many points also, which could not be seen from the French positions, are here visible, including part of the course of the river Meuse.

Near Villette is seen a broken railway bridge, the only one which the French destroyed, and between it and Fresnois lies the chateau of Bellevue, where the Emperor had his interview with the Prussian King.

During the battle, columns of the German troops were drawn up in the low ground at the foot of the hill of Cheveuge, where the hollows and undulations afford (though it would hardly appear so from the summit of the hill) complete concealment from an enemy occupying, as the French did, the Floing spur and the high ground above Sedan.

We should imagine that the neighbourhood of a great battle-field could seldom offer a more perfect position than this from which—comparatively speaking, in safety—to watch the contest and to direct the movements of a large army; and to no one who has stood as we did upon these heights, and upon the spur above Floing (where the heavy guns of the Germans were placed the morning after the battle), can it be longer a matter of surprise why the French army, after their defeat and retreat into Sedan, surrendered as prisoners of war. It had no alternative, being caught as it were in a rat-trap, from which it could not hope to issue, and resistance in which would only have brought upon it a complete destruction.

After nearly an hour spent on this hill, we returned to Sedan, and as we did not like to leave the town without seeing for ourselves the ambulance of the Anglo-American Society, concerning whose charitable exertions we had heard so much, we walked up to the citadel, within the gates of which, in a large empty barrack, it had its quarters, and by permission of the surgeon went through the wards. Everything here seemed in most perfect order, the rooms airy and good; and as many of the less severely wounded had gone home, there was no over-crowding.

We believe that some of the surgeons of the ambulance, while dressing the wounded near this very spot on the afternoon of the fight, were themselves struck by pieces of shell fired from the German guns.

The town of Sedan, though under fire for some half-an-hour from the enemy's guns before the French, huddled together in its streets, offered to capitulate, bore but few traces of damage done. Shot marks on the Torey gate and several other spots were to be seen, but that was all.

The scene of anarchy that its streets must have presented as the French army crowded into it under fire can be easily pictured. We were told by Madame Tellicr, one of the principal booksellers of Sedan, that no words could express the sort of "pandemonium" that the place became. Before the battle even, it was, she said, bad enough, for the troops had by that time lost heart and become discouraged by defeat.

From all we saw and heard at Sedan, we imagine, as we have before alluded to, that the French troops both began the fight on the 1st September without confidence in their leaders or themselves, and that as the day wore on, and they found themselves outnumbered and surrounded, this feeling of despondency rapidly increased into all abandonment of hope for, and every united aim at, success.

Desperate bravery was shown by individuals and small bodies of men, but connected and well-directed efforts were wanting, and the tone and condition of the army was certainly, on the whole, bad.

CHAPTER IV.

SEDAN TO VERDUN.

ABOUT three o'clock in the afternoon we left Sedan and set off towards Mouzon.

Our object was to reach the German army near Verdun, as we had been told by some officers at Sedan that there was a possibility of that place being shortly bombarded.

A battery of guns captured at Sedan had been sent to the force around Verdun, and as at Mézières and Montmédy nothing very active was looked forward to, it appeared our best course to try and gain Verdun, and perhaps afterwards pass on to Metz.

All our efforts to obtain any kind of conveyance had failed, for every cart and horse was in requisition for the transport of the wounded, or for bringing in arms from the field of battle, and on the Commandant's advice we set off on foot, trusting to being able to procure some kind of vehicle further from the scene of the great fight.

Time being an object to us, made us grudge every delay caused by this slow mode of travelling ; but had it not been for this, no one could have desired a more pleasant way of moving over the country in the perfect weather which we were fortunate enough to enjoy.

On our road to-day we entered into conversation with a French peasant, who, on hearing that we were Englishmen, told us that he had just seen a stone cross near Balan which was to be put up to the memory of some English officer, who had been killed in the battle of Sedan.

Possibly this now marks the spot where the much-regretted

Colonel Pemberton fell, but whose body we were glad to see has been borne to an English home.

This officer, formerly in the Grenadier Guards, was killed by a French rifleman while acting as War Correspondent to the *Times* with the German army, his desire to see the action having led him too far into the fight.

It was nearly six o'clock before (*via* Bazeilles and Douzy) we arrived at Mouzon, a large town with a fine cathedral in it, and entered a little inn called the "Hôtel de Commerce," one of the first houses of the place.

It was at Mouzon that McMahon was driven with such loss over the Meuse on the 30th of August, and like Sedan, it was occupied by a German garrison, and was in a state of siege, no one being allowed in the streets after 9 p. m. To our request for something to eat, the landlady replied, rather to our surprise, that there was "a table d'hôte;" and before long we found ourselves seated at this, surrounded by surgeons of all nationalities—Belgian, German, French and English, bearing the red cross and at work with various ambulances—and by three or four private gentlemen of rank travelling to see wounded friends, among them a near relative (son or nephew) of Count Bismarck.

In one of the English surgeons we met a Mr. Turner, an ex-combatant officer of the army, who knew many friends of ours in Canada (where he had served with the 47th Regt.), as well as in other parts of the world, and who gave us much interesting information about the war. He spoke in high terms of the cheerfulness of the Prussian officers and soldiers under the privations which they had gone through in wet weather after the battle of Sedan, and of their fortitude under pain. To our question as to whether this was not equally the case with the French soldiers, he replied, "He ought not to say, as he had attended comparatively few of them, but that by nature the Germans seemed to be very peculiarly stoical under suffering." He also dwelt strongly upon the perfect organization with which the German volunteer civilian societies—Saxon, Bavarian, Wurtem-

burgian, &c.—formed themselves into bodies for the service of the wounded, and of the good work done generally by the Volunteer Association of the Johanniter, or Knights of St. John. This society is composed almost entirely of members of good German families, and we saw several combatant officers on active duty with the army wearing the cross of the order, which is highly thought of. Their assistance, we suppose, was principally confined to money aid. It was a pleasure to us to listen to a Prussian surgeon speak in high praise of the exertions of the English and Anglo-American Ambulance Society, saying that it was very efficient, and did hard and zealous work, rendering great service to the wounded of both nations. No doubt, among the many who have donned the red cross in this war, there are some who have done so for pure convenience of travelling, (for the red cross passes, or use to pass, freely,) and some for even more unworthy motives; but the badge has certainly won itself admiration and respect on the whole.

From our medical companions we learnt, also, that the French wounded were generally shot in the middle of the body or back, the Germans high up in the body, the tendency of the French being to fire high; and that men recovered very quickly from the wounds of the chassepot bullet.

It was at Mouzon that the Bavarian officer, mentioned before as said to be suffering under the boiling oil thrown on him at Bazeilles, was stated to be lying.

One thing which struck us much in this place, and which had been gradually forcing itself upon us since we left Belgium, was the absence of all news from the seat of war. People knew less than we did—fresh as we were from London and the *Times*—of the more recent events of the campaign.

Letters were, we were told, rarely received. A Dutch surgeon had been five weeks without hearing from his wife in Holland, and Mr. Turner had been almost an equally long time without news from England; the reason given for this was that the Field-post, though it could be used to take letters out from those

with the army, was not always to be counted upon to bring letters in.

The inhabitants of the villages were completely ignorant of what was going on. They had all been told (probably as a matter of policy by the Germans) of the French disaster of Sedan; but beyond this they were perfectly in the dark as to where the French armies were, and many of them talked as if they expected that their villages might be at any moment retaken by the French generals, whom they imagined to be close in the neighbourhood.

There is nothing, of course, in the least unaccountable in all this, for the machinery of special correspondents, and telegrams and newspapers, is not employed for the benefit of the residents of Sedan or Mouzon, as it is for those of London; but it struck one as strange that the knowledge of events should be so very much less among all classes nearer the theatre of their occurrence, than at miles away from it in another land.

The poor landlady of the Hôtel de Commerce seemed to have adopted one formula in answer to a request for anything, except what she had set out upon the table d'hôte, "*Monsieur, les Prussiens ont tout pris;*" and she gave it out to us even when we applied for the key which was wanting in the bed-room lock.

At Mouzon we tried hard, as at Sedan, to get a conveyance, but here again everybody's horse and cart seemed in requisition.

One of the surgeons told us he could have *given us* a horse (one of two or three which he had got, and of which any number could be picked up for the taking and feeding after the surrender at Sedan), but that he had already offered it as payment to a villager for carrying a parcel for him to Douhéry, for he was going away soon from Mouzon and would not require the animal, the last he had kept, any more.

This incident struck us as being curiously characteristic of the exceptional state of things produced by the war.

Failing in all private attempts to get a vehicle or animal of any description, we went to the Commandant to see if he could aid us.

Here we suffered for the sins of another, for we were told that it was entirely out of his power to grant conveyances, more especially as he had done so to one who had letters from the English Ambassador, Count Bernstoff, and who came from England, and now five days had elapsed, and his cart and horse had never been returned. Fortunately, as one of us knew the name of this offender, we were able to convince the Commandant that he was, at all events not an Englishman, but an ex-Prussian officer, who had lived some time in England, and his threats of imprisonment for him, if he ever caught him, on hearing this, were very amusing. We failed, therefore, in getting a conveyance; and with the exception of a lift of two miles or so, upon a little donkey cart, kindly given to us by a good-natured Swiss surgeon, who turned back a little for the purpose, and who had "picked it up" in some manner, we walked on to Stenay, where we arrived about mid-day. Our kind driver was very amusing in his conversation. "Ah!" he said, "battles are nasty things! Just because I knew languages, my chief said to me, 'Here, you go in front under fire; because you can speak, if they make a mistake and are going to shoot at you;' so I had to go, and one big Prussian, who could not see the cross on my arm, was just going to fire when I called out to him—and then the shells coming 'phut,' 'phut!'—*Ah! ce n' était pas joli du tout, du tout!*"

"Now," he said (encouragingly), "I must turn back here. The country is full of robbers; it's a fine time for them, and no one cares whether you're murdered or not, if you ain't a Prussian."

Our road to-day lay through the villages of Moulins, Inor and Martincourt, and over a lovely country. Long stretches of meadow land bordered the Meuse, dotted over here and there with grazing cattle, and on each side of us spread away a succession of sweeping hills, deeply wooded,—from the nooks and valleys among which peeped out the church spires of red tiled and picturesque French villages. But these villages, though they pleased the eye at a distance under the bright morning sun,

were dreary and deserted-looking enough when you entered their streets. Half the inhabitants had left their houses and fled; and as we passed through Martincourt, a wretched-looking being, finding we were English, asked if we thought he could obtain employment as a wood-turner in England, his occupation being gone, and he and his family being at the point of starvation in Martincourt.

We noticed that the telegraph wires along the road to-day bore marks of having been cut and replaced again in very many parts.

On entering Stenay, which is an open town of some size, we saw a detachment of the 4th German Hussars just come in from before Verdun. This detachment, wearing a sort of dark, chocolate coloured uniform, with tight breeches and butcher boots, and mounted on small horses in good condition, had the look of thoroughly workmanlike campaigners, though their appointments had none of the polish that we get in time of peace in England. They carry a breech-loading carbine, strapped to the saddle after our old clumsy fashion. But they were lighter in appearance than the Uhlans (Lancers), who are as heavily equipped as any English Lancer regiment, and carry a more clumsy lance—and a great contrast to the Prussian heavy cavalry, whose large cuirasses, and pot helmets, and heavy boots, worn much as in Charles I. time, give them exactly the look of the dragoons of Cromwell, as shown in the pictures of that period.

While upon the subject of the Prussian Cavalry, which arm has been made so much use of, and worked so well in this war, we may mention that we gathered in conversation with officers the following particulars, which may be of interest to soldiers:—

The Cuirassiers, or Heavy Cavalrymen, assert that their cuirass turns the French chassepot bullet—*i. e.*, causes it to glance off—and that it is beyond doubt of great defensive value.

The kit carried by the Uhlans consists of a shabraque, blanket, shirt, one pair of socks, a forage cap, and a pair of slippers, (the latter often placed in the right holster). In addition to this kit

the man, of course, has the uniform he sits in. His arms are lance, sword and pistol, and he often carries with him one day's provision of corn.

The men place the blanket (which, while useful as such, stands in lieu of our numnah) next the horse's back, the saddle over it, and often between the saddle and the shabraque a suit of linen slop clothes for dirty work,—the shabraque, a light cloth one, going over all, and, of course, giving a better appearance to the turn-out. Three or four waggons go with each squadron, and carry spare things and horse shoes for each horse.

We know that cavalymen in our service assert that the blanket, unless very carefully folded, rucks up and gives sore backs to the horses; but the Prussian Cavalry saddle is light and well raised off the backbone, and the Prussians stated that it and the blanket worked very satisfactorily. The girths to the Prussian saddle are made of twisted leather.

The Uhlans wear, at all events those of them we saw, strapped overalls as do our Lancers, not breeches short like their own Hussars, or loose trowsers tucked into the boots like the Austrian Uhlans.

The Hussar dress—putting arms (*i. e.*, the lance and its pennon) on one side, and speaking only of clothing,—if it be not the best, as many think it is, is beyond all doubt the most effective, and at the same time most workmanlike in appearance. We have never seen a horseman who realized our beau ideal of the Cavalier so completely as a keen-eyed Hussar officer who passed us one day well-mounted on the road near Metz in his chocolate coloured uniform, tight breeches and Hessian boots, covered with dust, and with a long straightish-shaped sword, hanging rapier-like by his side. He and his horse seemed alike full of the activity and dash which should mark cavalry, and both would have been fitting figures in a picture of the glittering and attractive side of "glorious war."

We believe that the German Hussar regiments are entitled to a good deal of the exceptional renown gained by the Uhlans as

reconnoiterers in the war, one half of the work having been done by them, but the glory having fastened itself to the attractive pennon of the Lancer. Every German cavalry soldier was at first dubbed by the French an "Uhlán," and so the name became very generally misapplied.

Almost all the German troopers we met with were intelligent in appearance, though by no means more so than those of an English regiment, and their horses were in good condition. One could not, of course, tell the number on the sick list.

Outpost work and reconnoitering are the duties most studied and attended to by them. Charges certainly have been made in the war (as a rule in open column of squadrons) but with frightful destruction to the cavalry.

The revolver buckled round the waists of some of the officers in Stenay, and which one only sees (with English officers at all events) when pretty close to an enemy, helped us to realize that we were drawing near now to the theatre of active hostilities. A Prussian company (250 men or so) garrisoned Stenay, which is within some ten miles of the French fortress of Montmédy.

The Commandant was most civil to us, giving us a pass to travel further, assisting us in the difficult job of finding a conveyance, and pointing out our best route upon the maps in his office. I have since been very sorry to hear of his fate, which was that of being surprised, a few nights after our visit, by a sortie from Montmédy, when he and all his followers were made prisoners by the French. In conversation with us the officers at Stenay spoke of the garrison of Montmédy as consisting of "only a few Mobiles;" and I fancy an undue contempt for it, combined with a foggy night, were the causes of their rather humiliating fate.

Even with the Commandant's assistance, it was no easy matter to find an unemployed conveyance in Stenay. A member of the first family to whom we went appealed to us imploringly with "My horse is now away, but I and my mother are here alone; how *can* I go with you?" and we were obliged to search a good

deal before we secured one. During this search we came across two of the most hospitable peasant families that we have ever met with in any country. One of the heads of these, a jolly sort of old woodman living in a very humble, little cottage, insisted on opening for us two bottles of different descriptions of *très bon vin*, while he sent his son to try and find a friend's cart for us. The son speedily returned with an exceedingly pretty girl, who had been a lady's maid in Paris, and unlearned village manners long since, and she conducted us to her father's house. Here, after sitting for some time eating grapes and coffee; in exchange our chocolate and cigars, and discussing the events of the war, we agreed with a son of the house to drive us to Bras, a German post before Verdun. The difficulty was to settle upon a route. The Commandant had told us to take a round about one by Buzancy and Grand Prè as safer from any chance robber or *Franc-tireur*; but the French peasant pointed out that this was seventeen kilometres—i. e., half a day's journey—longer than the direct one by Sivry, and that we, driven by a Frenchman and in plain clothes, had nothing to fear. Want of time and the honest look of the driver made us settle upon his plan, and we agreed to sleep at Sivry that night.

Our French hosts at Stenay did not appear to have suffered much from the war, though they were very decided in their expressions of the misery it was causing generally, especially to the agricultural classes and to owners of cattle. The woodman spoke well of the Germans individually, but was candid enough to say, (the strongest expression I heard used on my travels,) that he hoped "they would never get back to their own country."

Having experienced great kindness from both Germans and French in Stenay, we drove out of its gates between the two sentries (who carefully examined our passes) with feelings so perfectly balanced, that we were, I think, (as we ought to have been,) "impartial neutrals," rather given, perhaps, to moralize upon the folly of war in general. I have often thought since of

how the old woodman must have rejoiced over that surprise of the German garrison, and can see him now cracking another bottle of his *très bon vin* to celebrate the event.

Our drive of this afternoon led us through the villages of Mouzay and Dun, to Sivry, about fifteen miles.

We have said before that most of the villages between Mouzon and Stenay had appeared desolate to us, but those on our road to-day seemed to out-desolate their desolation, and Sivry was the most melancholy and forlorn of all. The cattle disease was raging here, and had combined with the war to ruin the little village, the neighbourhood of which, one would think, must be always lonely and deserted, as a cross close to the entrance marks the spot where an old woman, in November of 1869, had been devoured alive by a hungry wolf.

Scarcely a human being was to be seen in the dirty—filthily dirty—streets, and anything more suggestive of an abandoned, plague-stricken spot can hardly be imagined. There are three places which, from their dreary, ruined look, have impressed themselves above all others upon our minds during our life time—Cawnpore, after the massacre and the sacking of the bungalows; Bazeilles, near Sedan, and Sivry. The little auberge where we put up for the night, and which had its sign removed in the hopes of escaping Prussian visitors—who, the landlady told us, had on a former occasion cleared her out of everything, one soldier finally flourishing a bayonet and forcing her to show him to the cellar in order to get her best wine—was uninviting enough outside, but inside we were made fairly comfortable. The woman of the house spoke both discontentedly and very despondingly of her own prospects and of those of her village. One son was shut up in Verdun, from the direction of which place cannonading had been heard throughout that morning; another was in Montmédy. Her cattle had all died of the disease which was raging there, and she looked forward with certainty to the approaching visits of typhus and cholera, and other plagues bred by the poisoned air. In short, of all the

French villagers we had met with, she seemed to be the one who had felt the war as a personal calamity the most.

A lean pointer dog and a hungry cat, which mewed to us for food, shared the dinner with us ; and after sitting for half-an-hour round the kitchen fire with the keeper of the auberge, the landlady, our driver, and a dark-looking man, who appeared from we knew not where, and discussing the general misery caused by the war, we went up stairs to our bed-room in anything but a buoyant or cheerful frame of mind, one of the last questions which the landlady sent after us being, if we meant "to return that way," followed by a scolding injunction, as we touched the handle of a wrong door, not to "enter any other room but our own."

When once in the latter we were soon asleep, but were not destined to enjoy a very peaceful night of it. About twelve one of us awoke, and not liking the sounds which came at this time from the lower part of the house, called to the other, who proved to be awake also, and to have liked them still less.

Our discussion of these noises and the plan of action we adopted on account of them, make us smile now ; but at the time we felt in a very serious and anxious mood indeed, and though the story we are about to tell may raise a laugh against ourselves, we will relate it.

The possibility of our being in evil quarters flashed upon us. All the tales we had read of murders in Spanish and Pyrenean inns, of descending smothering beds, of missing travellers found buried under floors, and of the evil character given by the Prussians to some of the French peasantry, flashed through the mind.

We now saw how tempting a prize we must appear to any lawless men. We were evidently not Prussians, and therefore not likely to be enquired after, had money with us (for had we not agreed to pay a good sum for a conveyance?), and to all appearance (and we knew it to be the case ourselves) were without arms. Everything looked suspicious. Had the people at Stenay been civil to us only to induce us to go to Sivry? Was the

driver in league with the inn-keeper? Why had the strange-looking man come in? Was there anything concealed in the room, the door of which we were so scolded for touching? and, finally, why were they up at so late an hour?

Not being able to answer these questions satisfactorily, we got up, silently dressed by the moonlight, and prepared as far as we could for an emergency. To barricade the door well (though we did so slightly) was impossible. To fight our way down stairs and out, unarmed, and past three or four (perhaps knife-bearing) people, looked, though it was mooted, to be foolish bravery, so at last we resolved, as a final resort, and if the door was attempted, to drop from the window, some ten feet or so, into the street, and make for the Prussians towards Din.

All we can say to those who laugh at us, is, "May you never fancy yourselves in a like predicament!"

How the noises had stopped when we talked,—how we lay awake from twelve o'clock till dawn,—how once again they were renewed and again ceased,—how, finally, steps were heard coming up the stairs, which, on our showing unmistakeably that we were awake, paused and came no further, would not be interesting if described at length.

Suffice it to say, that we welcomed the dawn, and that we believed that we experienced two-thirds of the perhaps exciting, but most unpleasant sensations, of the individuals whose tales of escape from Spanish and Pyrenean inns we have before alluded to.

The next morning the landlady enquired how we had slept, and whether we would "return that way?" We said "perhaps," but inwardly determined that we never should; and though we are willing now to believe that our imaginations made fools of both of us that night, we resolved to stick in future to Prussian posts, and to the advice of their Commandants, and were not sorry to say good bye at length to Sivry.

About eight o'clock we set out again in our waggon for Bras, one of the outposts of the Prussian force that was blockading the

town and fortress of Verdun. As during yesterday's journey, so upon to-day's also, all the little villages on the road appeared abandoned and desolate, and much distress had evidently been caused by the disease among the cattle.

A company of foot artillery (probably going to Sedan) passed by us this morning, their knapsacks and accoutrements, we noticed, being carried for them in waggons ; and from one of the officers we heard that there had been a sortie from Verdun the day previously, which had been repulsed with slight loss, and hence the cannonade which had reached the ears of the landlady at Sivry. A two hours' drive, principally up hill, brought us to Bras, where we called to report ourselves to Major Von Dobschütz, the Commandant.

At this point, before going on our visit to the Germans near Verdun, we hope it will not be thought tedious if we give our impressions (gathered through our whole trip from Sedan to Metz) of the feeling of the peasantry in general towards those whom the fortune of war had brought to them as uninvited guests ; and an account of the Prussian system of requisitions—which is that followed by the whole German army—by which they obtained their supplies and transports in the various villages. Some misapprehension we think exists in many quarters on these subjects.

To begin with, we must say that in all the villages, without exception, through which we passed, the people did, reluctantly but invariably, admit that the German soldiers and officers conducted themselves well as a rule. We heard no abuse of the Germans as individuals. The tale of the landlady at Sivry, of the bayonet having been flourished at her, (and it must be remembered that the violence went no further) was the worst we had related to us. The usual phrase was "*Non, Monsieur, ils sont assez gentils !*"

That great suffering is, and will be, the result of the German occupation and of the war, in consequence both of the consumption of food and forage, and the withdrawal of almost all the

active men and the beasts of burden from the tillage of the soil, is very certain ; but, at all events, this evil did not appear to have been aggravated in any of the occupied districts we saw by wanton brutality or even by bullying language.

The manner of the German officers, though that of masters who meant to have their way, was always, as far as we observed it, rather markedly courteous. It would appear from the statements subsequently received from the seat of war around Paris, that this was not true of the Germans in that quarter, but we only speak of what we saw with our own eyes, and heard on the spot in Lorraine ; and the peasantry, it must be remembered, when told that we were English, were never reticent.

The expressions of "Ils ont tout pris," "Ils ont pillé partout," so very common, referred to the eatables and drinkables of life, and to horses ; and the German army system bore very hardly, as we will explain further on, upon the villagers in these respects, but their misery was ascribed invariably not to their visitors, the Germans (whom we often saw playing with and nursing their children,) but to "la guerre."

The people of Lorraine were, as a rule, (the old Garde de Chasse at Stenay was an exception) seemingly indifferent as to whether the Germans went or staid, provided they had "la tranquillité."

"Ma foi!" was the usual burden of their answer to our questions regarding their feelings at the prospect of annexation to Prussia, "Qu' est que c'est le Gouvernement à moi ? Je suis ouvrier ; je désire seulement la paix ;" or, "Ma foi ! qu' est que c'est à moi se je suis Français ou si je suis Allemand ?" &c.

The bitterness of the language of the peasantry seemed entirely directed against the much abused Napoleon III. "Quand j'ai vu cette malheureuse famille (*i. e.*, the Emperor and his son) entrer dans notre ville," said a woman to us in Sedan, "j' ai dit 'maintenant nous sommes perdus.'"

One is, of course, well aware of the little weight or importance that should be attached to sayings like the above. It is

easy to understand how the ground-down peasant, who shares none of the glory, but pays the penalty of war, may feel such a longing aspiration after "*la tranquillité*," even at the price of becoming a German, though he is a Frenchman at heart, and at the first sign of weakness or reverse on the part of his enemy would rise and crush him without mercy; and we also understand how very loudly those of the French who now abuse Napoleon III. and call him the sole originator of this war would have asserted their boundless admiration both for his person and his policy had he been successful; yet, with all this, the result of the many conversations which we held on our journeys among the peasantry in the Ardennes and Lorraine, was to convince us that the people in this part of the country would put up with a just and orderly German government far more cheerfully than people in England would be inclined to believe, and that after some years of such a firm and unoppressive government the enthusiasm necessary for a patriotic rising against German occupation would be sought for in vain.

With regard to the German method of payment for their supplies, we had our preconceived ideas much altered. It is common to hear the remark that the Germans "pay in paper" for what they take, or that they "give an acknowledgment on paper which is binding on the Government," &c., and we are tolerably certain that a very common impression in England is that this paper pledges the German Government to hand that peasant, or the village official who represents him, in cash, at some future time, the value of what was taken from him. Nothing is more erroneous than this idea, and no system of payment could well be devised which would carry out the First Napoleon's theory that "War should support war" (without exasperating more than is unavoidable the inhabitants of a country) more thoroughly than does the German one.

The German requisition is made for all necessary carriage, forage, food, tobacco and wine for men and officers, the scale of which is laid down by authority, and is a liberal one. The

paper is merely an acknowledgment to the mayor of a village, or other official, through whom the supplies are got, that they in reality were got, and *if* the Government of France chooses in the future to re-imburse the people for what they have lost, through no fault of their own, but through the fortune of war, these requisitions will enable the right sums to be apportioned out to the mayors, &c., of the villages, and through them to the villagers.

This, however, it can be at once seen, is a very different thing from "payment for all supplies" as it is understood and practised in war in the British Service, and, in fact, binds the German Government to nothing at all.

The villagers as a rule do not quite grasp this, and to obtain a formal piece of paper acknowledging the supplies looks like the probability of payment, and is far more satisfactory than no paper at all. Very probably, indeed, the French Government would in any case consider these requisitions as debts of honour, and will redeem them; but from what source is the money which is to do this to come, except from a tax on the nation, of which these very villagers will pay their share.

But as we have said above, it is only for carriage and the reasonable maintenance of man and beast that these paper acknowledgments are given. For all extra luxuries the individuals who obtain them must pay in cash, and any attempt at oppression or unfair dealing would meet with a prompt punishment. The German authorities deal very severely with grave offences against the inhabitants. We were told by an inhabitant of Sedan that a soldier had been shot a few days previous to our visit for stealing a watch. Thus in all private dealings in which officers or soldiers come into personal contact with the villagers, the usual payments (at ordinary rates) are made, the relative value of German and French money being posted up conspicuously throughout the villages by the German authorities.

Now, by reflection upon this system of payment, it can be seen that though the German Government in reality pays, and

binds itself to pay, nothing to the French for the food and transport of the army, it deals in these matters with the villagers indirectly (*i. e.*, through the Maire or French official), and gives to him a paper acknowledgment, which may some day, at the end of the war, be to the peasant worth something; and that, on the other hand, where any direct relation between its soldiery and the individual villagers takes place, it insists upon cash, and the correct sum in cash, being given.

It would be, we think, difficult to devise a system combining practical economy, with the advantages of conciliating the population dealt with, more than this does. We are not sure that, though a hard and ungenerous system, it can be termed an unfair one.

The English Government pays for everything in war, even though the war be forced upon it, and does so at an enormous expense to the English people; and yet why should the English people be out of pocket more than the people of the country causing the war.

The French pay for nothing (at least so it is generally asserted of them by those who have served with them), and thus make bitter enemies of the inhabitants of the countries they make war on.

The Germans, as far as possible, hit the medium between the two extremes.

We should be sorry though, for all this, to see the English system changed, for it is a generous and noble one; and under any other, the peasantry of a country—who, as a rule, have but little to do with causing wars—must suffer for a time more grievously than any subsequent payment can make up for. In a long war, also, (if the days of long ones are not past) the English practice will prevail, as it gains the good-will of the inhabitants.

CHAPTER V.

VERDUN—ITS BOMBARDMENT.

THE Commandant at Bras gave us not only a courteous, but a most friendly reception, and at our request, after having asked some questions to satisfy himself as to our trustworthy character, permitted us to visit the advanced posts and sentries on the heights of Belleville, accompanied by one of his officers, who volunteered most kindly to do everything in his power to show us all that was of interest.

The Germans immediately around Verdun were distributed among the villages of Bras, Fleury, Eix, Vaux, &c., and had, up to the day before our arrival, been in insufficient strength to entirely close all access to the town, but a small force having just arrived, it was now completely surrounded.

Our guide, a Staff officer, rode by our side for about one-and-a-half miles out of Bras along the Verdun road. If one follows this road for about that distance, one will see a small copse of wood to the right, just where the road begins to descend towards Verdun. Here one of the German pickets was placed, but before coming to it we turned off to the left into a country path, and, after making a detour of some distance and keeping in the low ground to avoid observation, we came to another picket, to which our guide entrusted his horse, remarking that we were now within short cannon range of the enemy's guns, and that the French, who had plenty of ammunition and signalmen on the look out in the Cathedral tower, invariably sent a shell after any one, especially on horseback, who exposed himself.

Then turning into a thick copse of low beech trees, he led us through it to its further edge, which lined the crest of one of

the hills on the plateau of Belleville overlooking the valley of the Meuse. Here partially parting the branches and carefully placing his sword on one side to guard against its glitter being seen, he showed us Verdun lying at our feet. The nearest bastion of the fortress could hardly have been more than 1,500 yards distant, and six feet from the spot where we stood was a large gap rent in the earth by the explosion of a shell. With a field-glass we had a distinct view of all the buildings of the town. Dominating the whole ran the high double tower of an old Norman cathedral, upon which the French sentries were to be seen holding flags for signalling in their hands. More to the right stood the citadel; between us and the body of the town came part of the outer circle of fortifications, on Vauban's system, with its bastions and curtains and broad ditches; and nearer than all wound the river Meuse, the railway bridge over which had been rendered impassable by blowing up the arch nearest to the works.

Verdun, lying as it does in low ground surrounded by hills, must always at the present day be at the mercy of an enemy provided with siege artillery.

The Germans, however, had no guns of greater calibre than the six-pounder Krüpp breech-loading field gun used in their own service, and a battery of French twelve-pounder field guns captured at Sedan, just arrived, and whose departure from the latter place we have before mentioned that we had been informed of.

These batteries would, it is to be noticed, correspond respectively to about twelve and twenty-six (or perhaps heavier guns in the English service; for the Germans and French name their artillery in pounds by what would be the weight of a spherical shot of the diameter of the bore, whereas we name it by the weight of the heavy elongated projectile really used. Thus their guns may be considered as being in truth doubly as formidable as guns called by the same number in the English army.

The artillery of the fortress of Verdun was formidable enough easily to overpower the six-pounder guns at any range at which the latter could do much damage to the works, and the French twelve-pounders having only recently been received, no bombardment had as yet been attempted, the active hostilities being confined to the repulse of an occasional sortie, and intermittent firing to harass the German posts.

The sentries on the Cathedral tower were a source of great annoyance to the Germans, as they were continually on the alert, and from their elevated position were able to see and direct shells to be fired upon patrols, &c., that would otherwise have escaped observation.

With the exception of these sentries and the occasional glitter of steel (suggestive of a bayonet) appearing along the ramparts, there was nothing in the town which indicated the presence of human life, and for some time not a sound breaking the extreme stillness of the day arose from its streets. At length the report of a cannon fired towards a German outpost on the side opposite to us boomed upon the air, but there was no answer to the shot, and the silence once again reigned unbroken.

To gaze upon this beleagured town had to us a sort of fascination in it difficult perhaps to explain, but which we confess to having felt. Apparently asleep or dead, we knew it to be instinct with a watchful and dangerous life, and though its ramparts, and walls, and buildings, must have borne much the same look as they had done in peaceful times, the imagination helped to clothe them with one entirely different. We stood for some time looking down upon the quiet town, careful lest by a breaking twig or crackling leaf we should arouse it from its slumber, and cause it to cry out wrathfully at us from the black mouths of the cannon pointing in menace from the embrasures. Then going quietly back, we were led by our guide to many other points where we could obtain different views, and finally—after a visit to some of the advanced sentries, and to the infantry and cavalry pickets, which we came upon unexpectedly round the

corner of a wood or in some dip in the hills—by the road we had originally come over, back to Bras.

Here we dined with the Commandant and one of his officers in their billet in the Mairie, and afterwards had coffee and a very pleasant hour's conversation with the officer commanding the field battery. We had, while at dinner, an example of the unnecessary obsequiousness of the French Mayors, and of the curious combination of accomplishments that may be found in a Landwehr soldier. Coming in, napkin in hand, to see if we were all well served, the Mayor took occasion to say that neither France nor England were now the great countries of the world, but Prussia. "Though I am a Frenchman, I say, gentlemen, that the greatest country in the world is Prussia." This he said twice.

There was no occasion for his making the remark at all; this is the only fault we are finding with it.

The Landwehr corporal, whose accomplishments we have spoken of, was a gigantic German, about 6 feet 5 inches in height, and who I suppose was a known character to his officers; for on his being asked, evidently to elicit a certain answer, what he was by occupation? he replied, with a laugh, "Formerly teacher of Mathematics, afterwards Professor of Natural Philosophy, and now corporal in the Landwehr."

The officers here told us that at the village of Charny, close to and visible from Bras, two German cuirassier officers had been murdered not long before. They had ridden into the town and dismounted at an inn for breakfast, but on trying to leave the village, a mob collected and demanded their surrender. Refusing to yield, they endeavoured to cut their way through the mob, and were both killed.

"They said," went on our informant, that "the Franc-tireurs, and not the villagers killed them, *otherwise* we'd have burnt down the village. The next time we will make an example."

We emphasize the word "*otherwise*" expressly, because it seems to show that in the early days of their appearance the

Franc-tireurs, though not acknowledged as soldiers, were by some at all events admitted to have a sort of right to kill, which was denied to villagers. It was different afterwards, when bloodshed and retaliation so disgracefully embittered the war. To our question of whether the French officials and villagers were not as a rule courteous and civil to them? the answer was, "Oh, when we're in bodies, currisldy civil (*houndisch freundlich*), but when alone, they murder us like dogs."

After our coffee, we visited the battery of French twelve-pounders, and then left for Eix, the headquarters of the force round Verdun, bearing with us a note from one of the Bras officers to an aid-de-camp on the Staff of General Von Bothmer, who commanded at that point, and with the hope that we might have the opportunity of seeing from thence some shots exchanged with the fortress next day.

As a lesson in out-post duty, our visit in the morning to the pickets and sentries thrown out from Bras had been we felt more practically useful and instructive than many mornings' play at the same branch of a soldier's education in a peaceful garrison or camp.

It was not that we saw much that required any particular explanation or that was strikingly new to us.

As in the English service, the German advanced sentries are invariably (this they lay great stress on) posted double, never single, and the system carried out here of the furnishing and relief of the sentries by the Feld-wach or picket seemed to correspond substantially with our own. One or two minor points of departure from our strict peace regulations as laid down in the red book were to be noticed; for instance, every sentry was allowed to smoke, without any restriction, while on duty. Tobacco, in fact, is regarded as a stimulant to watchfulness, not as a somnolent, and a pipe is as universally cherished a portion of the German soldier's equipment as the weapon he carries, the Uhlans very generally having a long China one with a huge bowl suspended from the breast of their tunics.

But though in the system itself we saw no great divergence from our own, there was an earnestness in carrying it out, which naturally is not to be met with, or capable of being aroused, upon the drill field, or during a sham fight in peace.

The stooping gait of the patrols as, with their rifles ready at the thigh, they reconnoitered to the front through the close vineyards and wooded grounds; the care with which the spiked helmet was taken off, or the steel scabbard moved out of the way, so that there might be no tell-tale gleam from the rays of the sun; the well concealed spots chosen for the fires at which the pickets cooked; and many other small but interesting points, gave a sense of reality to what was going on, and therefore left an impression all the more clear and lasting.

The German troops at Bras consisted for the most part of Landwehr, and reserve, with an intermixture of the line. This mingling of the troops of different lengths of service we found to hold very generally (the Landwehr predominating) at the various points between Sedan and the neighbourhood of Metz; some of the officers—and, I think, almost invariably the senior ones—being officers *en permanence*, *i. e.*, regular officers.

The Englishman, from association of ideas, very often considers—and in spite of all one has read of the Prussian organization, (which will now be the model for all Germany,) until one actually sees the men themselves it is difficult to avoid doing so—that the Landwehr and reserve must be a less practised body of men than the line, in fact men corresponding to his own militia and reserve forces in comparison with his own line.

Nothing could be wider from the fact than this idea, every Prussian having necessarily to serve three years (beginning at the age of twenty) with the colours, and then four with the Landwehr.

The Landwehr, man or officer, is merely one in the prime of life who has gone through his full three years' regular training, and some intermittent soldiering with the Landwehr as well; and as the wars with Denmark and Austria (in 1864 and 1866)

have been so recently fought, a great proportion of the men we saw had served a campaign, and were decorated with one, two, and sometimes more medals.

The fact of the German army, by reason of the late war, being so exceptionally trained just now (Landwehr and all) for active service, has not, we think, been generally sufficiently considered.

The nation is not only a nation of soldiers, by reason of every man having to serve and go through drill, but exceptionally just now a nation of campaigners.

With regard to the stamp of the Landwehr and reserve officers (to use a term which is expressive in England), it is only natural that, under a system which obliges all classes to serve in some capacity, the officer's rank will be sought for and obtained as a rule by men of comparatively good position, or of some kind of influence.

It results from this, that as the number of officers required is large, the upper and upper middle classes appear to furnish them. For instance, of those we met around Verdun, one was a nobleman of property; another a gentleman farmer, who meant, at the conclusion of the war, to go to Edinburgh to learn to manage his farm; a third was putting in his time in the college which qualifies in Germany for the Department of Woods and Forests, and hoping to find, eventually, (as others have done, and as some of our officers do) employment in that department under the British Government in India; a fourth was a mining engineer; a fifth a man of means, who had left London suddenly to return to Germany and do his duty with his regiment.

As a class, in fact, they correspond very nearly to that which officers the English army.

All of the officers above alluded to, though called away at the outbreak of the war from civilian employment of all kinds, (and not ashamed to admit that they longed for peace), looked perfectly at home as soldiers, into which career they had been fully initiated, and all had the manner of gentlemen.

In Prussia they do not approve of any but gentlemen holding commissions, and it was evident that, whether from prejudice or not, the officers had been strengthened in their views by their experience of the French officers and the discipline of their army in this war.

As the whole nation, however, must serve, it follows that there are many gentlemen unable to obtain commissions, and who must enter the ranks, and it results from this, and from the general education of the country, that the status of the rank and file is raised, and that the officers have a greater *entente cordiale* with their men than would otherwise be the case.

They showed them, I could see, in a marked manner, every possible respect and thoughtfulness, while keeping up at the same time a strict discipline.

When an educated rank and file under a trained caste of officers, united in feeling and with a large amount of European field experience, is handled and looked after by men of exceptional talent for administration and strategy, no wonder that under a Von Roon and a Moltke it has succeeded as it has.

There is a satisfaction in thinking that in many respects the English army bears a strong resemblance to the German, and that when trained and handled, and above all administered as well, it will accomplish as much—to say *more*, in view of what has been done in this war, would be meaningless. In minor details of dress and equipment, we have, I suspect, little to learn from either cavalry or infantry, nor do I think from artillery.

In speaking as above of the German army, I speak of both officers and men as a class. Exceptions are to be found to all rules, and we met with one or two very ordinary specimens of the German officer and with many slovenly louts of soldiers, but they were exceptions and were not rules.

It was past five when we left Bras, and became dusk while we were still upon the road leading round by the North of Verdun to Eix.

To be out after sunset was, we found, under our circumstances,

a decided mistake. In the first place we lost the way, though only for a time, and the sensation of doing this at night in an unquiet district is not agreeable; in the next place we had a small difficulty with one of the German posts, which was aggravated, if not caused, by our being abroad at so late an hour.

At every village we had passed through after leaving Bras we had been asked for our papers by the examining party of a non-commissioned officer and three or four men at the entrance; but about dusk we reached the village of Fleury, and not being stopped, passed on towards the centre of the place, expecting there to have to show our papers, when we were suddenly and very sharply ordered to halt and descend, and were brought by some soldiers before an officer, whom we saw was in a towering passion.

He asked us what we meant by avoiding his sentries and entering the village, and who we were? and to our reply that no sentries had challenged us on the road, and that we were travellers taking an interest in his profession, and who wanted to see the war, he answered by sending in great indignation for the sentries, who were soon confronted with us, telling us at the same time in French that travelling at nightfall through the outposts of any army for the "pleasure of seeing war" was hardly, in his opinion, a likely story, that no *soldiers*, as we said we were, would attempt to pass a sentry; and that, at all events, we'd better stay till the following morning in his guard-room, when he'd escort us out to see some more French shells (*obus*) than he thought we'd care about.

All this time he was too angry to pay much attention to our passports, &c., which we kept trying to show to him, and his ill-temper was still further increased by a sergeant, who whispered to him in German, "Lieutenant, you forget that you are speaking in French; the people here (by that time a small crowd of curious villagers had collected near us) have heard you mention the intention to open fire in the morning."

"Who are your sympathies with?" he now said, turning to us,

(rather a narrow-minded remark, by the way,) and on our replying, "With you, and also with the French; we are English, as we tell you, and are neutrals;" he gave a sort of "Humph," as much as to imply that that was a description of animal for which he had the most unmitigated and peculiar contempt.

Altogether, when at last the two sentries came up and grounded their rifles upon each side of us, we made up our minds to an uncomfortable night of it.

I shall always think that it was most creditable to the character of the German soldier that these sentries, when very angrily questioned by their officer, told the exact truth, admitting they had seen, but not stopped us. They urged some misunderstanding of their orders, and were at length severely reprimanded and dismissed. It would have been easy for them to have endeavoured to screen themselves at our expense.

This admission of the sentries mollified our friend's disposition towards us, and on a careful perusal of our passports, and especially of the letter we bore with us from the officer at Bras, he made every apology for his hastiness and passed us on to Eix.

The inconvenience we suffered was not very great, but it is unpleasant to have one's assertions roughly questioned; and any traveller arriving so late with a mere passport (or without any private letter), especially if weak in languages, would probably have passed the night in the guard-room.

When we arrived at Eix we reported ourselves at General Von Bothmer's headquarters, and found him and his Staff at a late dinner, and upon sending in our passports and letter, were received with great kindness, being at once asked by the General to join them at table and offered a bed by the officer (Graf Von Kospoth), to whose good offices we had been recommended, and who was billeted in the house of a French villager a little way off.

It was arranged to mount us the following morning, that we might see the bombardment of Verdun (the first that took place), which was to begin at 6 a.m., from the different French batteries

around the town, and of which we had received some inkling before leaving Bras.

As it happened that the General, some of his officers and ourselves had mutual acquaintances in Hanover, this meeting was all the more pleasant for us, and after an enjoyable two hours we turned in, feeling that we were very lucky to be in our present quarters, instead of in the guard-room, which had once threatened us so imminently at Fleury.

The next morning we were up before daylight, and after a cup of coffee rode with the General and his Staff to another portion of the same heights of Belleville we had been on at Bras, and stopped at Belleville, about two-and-a-half miles off, passing on the road one of the field batteries on its way to take up its position.

A "Good morning," called out by one of the officers to the men of the battery, was responded to by a very cheery and universal "Morgen, Morgen" from the latter, a sort of interchange between the different ranks upon the line of march, which sounded strangely to an English ear, but very well and hearty, notwithstanding. Arrived at our destination, we rode with Graf Von Kospoth, who remained with us through the morning, to a point from whence we could see Verdun lying beneath us at Bras, but at a greater distance off, and where we stayed waiting till the puffs of smoke should rise from the crests behind which were the German batteries. At length they curled upwards from some three different points into the air, and the bombardment began.

As we have before mentioned, the German guns were of small calibre, and the object of the day's firing was not so much to do any great damage to the works, which could hardly be hoped for, as to show the besieged that they were now surrounded, and thus deter them from further sorties; to try and drive the signalmen from the Cathedral towers, and to test the range and power of the captured French battery. To fire upon a cathedral is generally considered an act of vandalism in war; but, at the same

time, it is clear that if its towers are used openly as advantageous positions for signalmen, the general who respects them will be charged, and justly so, by his own soldiers as having more regard for the preservation of buildings than of their lives. In fact, if they are to be viewed as sacred, they ought not to be made use of as a means of actively annoying the besiegers. The German officers expressed regret, which, from their manner, I believe was sincerely felt, at having to direct their shot against the tower, and it is only fair that those (as we ourselves have often done), who exclaim loudly against firing at cathedrals, should hear the German side of the question.

For some twenty minutes there was no response from the fortress to the German challenge—the garrison, which had hitherto been left pretty well to itself, being evidently unprepared for so early an attack upon it. At length, however, the citadel, one of the bastions and a ravelin began to reply, and from that time the firing went on steadily from both sides for some three-and-a-half hours, when General Von Bothmer ordered the German batteries to cease. There is something, after all, partaking of the monotonous in a bombardment. The little clouds of smoke, the booming reports, and the rattling of the shells as they burst in the streets, are repeated again and again, and though exciting at first, the interest ceases before long, and we were not sorry when at length the French were left in peace.

The result of the morning had been to prove that though the field batteries could not to any useful extent oppose the heavier artillery of the works, the French ammunition and guns could be handled with good effect. Twice the town appeared to have been set on fire, but the flames were on both occasions speedily got under. The loss on the German side was very slight, being only one sous-officer killed, and some four men and an officer wounded. Of the French loss, of course, we were ignorant. It was stated to be the intention to wait until the arrival of heavy guns from Toul, which had just fallen, before renewing the bombardment.*

* Subsequently a continuous fire from the heavy guns caused the surrender of the place by Baron Guerin de Waldersbach, the Governor, without awaiting an assault.

During the bombardment we rode to many different points, visiting, as at Bras, some of the advanced pickets and sentries, and seeing much that was of interest.

The accuracy of the French artillery fire, and the fact of their firing at any chance horsemen (as asserted at Bras) was clearly proved to us; for at one time our companion, having previously sent forward some men to clear a neighbouring vineyard from any chance Franc-tireur, had taken us up to within about 1,700 yards of the outworks, where we were having an excellent view, as we hoped, unobserved. To our serious disappointment we found we had been perceived, a cloud of smoke came out of a hitherto silent embrasure directly in our front, and as we saw it and galloped off, a well-aimed shell pitched and burst within ten yards of where we had just been standing, but luckily a little beyond, so that its pieces did us no damage.

I think few people would care to enjoy a view under these circumstances. None of us did, but we rapidly changed ground, being rewarded for so doing by a second shell, which, aimed more hurriedly than the first, went without bursting, well over our heads, our companion muttering contemptuously—"Time!" meaning that the shell was, he believed, fired with a time fuse, of the efficacy of which fuses, as compared with their own percussion, all the German officers we met with were in the habit, rightly or wrongly, of expressing a poor opinion. They consider that at present no time fuse (our own included) has been invented which is sufficiently simple, and at the same time can be made to explode the shell with such accuracy as to render it as good all round as their own percussion.

As we disappeared down a valley, round the corner of a little brick cattle shed, our companion called out to a picket near it to "Take care," as the French would probably think we had entered it, and the truth of his supposition was proved by our seeing, a few moments afterwards, two shells in succession burst almost on the walls of the building.

We were at this time standing with two or three other officers

in a small mustard field, and the practice of the enemy seemed to strike them. "We had better move from here," one of them said, "and separate a little; the French are firing too well, and dark uniforms are conspicuous on the yellow ground."

The time fuses did their work well, at all events on this occasion, though, from the warning given, they fortunately caused no loss, and we gave the Verdun batteries a wider berth for the remainder of the morning.

After returning to Eix, and while the General and his Staff were at the business of the day, we amused ourselves in walking about the grounds of the small French chateau in which we were quartered, and, to while away the time, sat down by the side of a fish pond full of carp, which came swimming up to us to be fed, and wrote up our note books, which for two or three days had been allowed to fall behind-hand. The owners of this chateau had evidently been fond of field sports, for there was a kennel on the grounds containing several dogs, all with more or less of the fox-hound and pointer breed in them—one, according to a French servant's assertion (though we must withhold our corroboration) being pure English. "Ah!" he said, as they pawed the bars and were clamorous to get out, "Ils n'iront pas à la chasse cette année!"

What a change the war had caused in the surroundings and brought to the owners of this bright-looking country house!

Outside the flower-beds were trampled down and neglected, the walks unswept, the lawn strewn with leaves and rubbish; while inside the enemy clanked about the passages, and lounged on the sofas, and spread his maps upon the table, planning the conquest of the French garrison not four miles distant, of which, perhaps, the owner of this very property formed a part.

About one o'clock we had luncheon with the General and his Staff—the Mayor, nominally in honour of our visit, but a good deal, we imagine, to conciliate the Prussians, coming in person to look after us, and sending in his best wine, curaçoa, cigars, and all kinds of luxuries. I am ashamed to say we did full

justice to them ; I say *ashamed*, for we did not like him or his civility (the excess of which could have pleased no one) in our hearts. These officials had undoubtedly a hard game to play ; but making all due allowance for that, we can quite understand why the French Emperor dismissed one of them early in the war for attention to the Germans, which he considered amounted to want of patriotism.

The General very kindly offered to forward us on the next stage to Etain in his carriage, a large sort of covered waggente, the property in peaceful times of the Mayor, but now at his temporary disposal. While we were at Luncheon, a lieutenant of Cuirassiers came in from Etain to make a report to his chief, the purport of which will serve to show with what weak detachments some of the links of the chain of communication between Verdun and Metz were held.

It was (he told us himself afterwards) that in consequence of some changes he felt so dangerously weak, that he considered it his duty to ask the General for a reinforcement. He had only twelve troopers in a town of several hundred people, (and no other soldiers in it). "Jolly little," he said, "to keep them in order." Yet he put a bold face upon it, and on the General, for reasons best known to himself, refusing more men, appeared to dismiss the matter once for all from his mind.

Such a weak party would seem almost to have courted murder ; but, of course, it was well understood in Etain what the fate of the village and inhabitants would have been, had it been attempted.

In a discussion at the table to-day, it was said that the French chassepot carried so much further than the needle-gun, that the Germans often had to march some 800 yards under its fire before they could return a shot, and that their men began to drop from it at a distance of 1800 yards ; that the French fought very bravely at various times, but that they came into action, firing away without taking aim, (often without bringing their rifles to the shoulder,) in the most reckless manner, and when once re-

pulsed would not come again with any determination to the attack. Their own men (*i. e.*, the Germans) had the habit, it was said, of always giving three distinct hurrahs ! one after the other, just before going into a fight.

At about three o'clock, we said good bye to our hosts at Eix, whose kind welcome of us we shall never forget, and as we set off in the carriage drawn by four horses for Etain, and accompanied along the road by the lieutenant of Cuirassiers, who was riding back to his post, we could not help surmising what particular description of grandee the peasants, who doffed their caps to us along the road, most probably took us for ; whether, being in plain clothes, only for Bismarck and his secretary, or for two greater autocrats in disguise. We say "greater autocrats," because in military-ridden Germany we have heard even Bismarck himself (simply because he has for years been in civil employ) spoken of in a tone of half disparagement as only "a mere civilian."

CHAPTER VI.

VERDUN TO METZ, BY GRAVELOTTE.

AT Etain the Cuirassier officer got us a waggon and horse through the Mayor, and after spending half-an-hour with him in his comfortable quarters in the Mairie—the most luxurious we had seen—we pushed on towards Conflans, which we reached just before dusk. Our drive of this afternoon was not a very cheerful one. The country had a melancholy, deserted look, and the poor old driver was evidently dismally frightened by our having impressed him.

“Oh,” he said, “when a man goes away now, one never knows when he will come back. Do, Messieurs, give me a paper, so that no one will take me after I get to Conflans. When Monsieur le Maire impressed me, my wife and three children all began to cry; there is no tilling or sowing going on while I’m away, and they thought I might never return.” We told him he need not be afraid of us, and that he would be sent back that very night with a “*sauf conduite*” without fail; but we said, “You must expect evils in time of war; why did you wish for war?” “Ah, Monsieur, I never wished for war; we only lose by war; that was that miserable Emperor.” “Yes,” we replied, “but you voted for the Emperor; everybody knew that that meant voting for war? Didn’t you vote for the Empire in the Plebiscite?”

“Plebiscite, Monsieur; what’s the plebiscite? I don’t understand you, Monsieur.” Apparently he had never even heard of it!

Presently an old man came up to us on the road, thinking probably we might have some authority to interfere, and wring-

ing his hands. "Monsieur, ils prennent toutes les vaches," (they are taking all my cows,) pointing to a field where we could see some German soldiers driving off the animals before them. Of course, we could do nothing to help him; but his distress did not tend to raise our spirits.

Arrived at Conflans, we met once more with a very good reception from the captain in command of the company (260 men) forming the garrison, who asked us to join him and his officers at their dinner in one of the little auberges of the village.

The inhabitants of Conflans bore the look of having been greatly oppressed and ground down by the war; there was a miserable dejected air about them, and we felt that we were nearing the circle where the requisitions of the large army around Metz were telling heavily.

From the window of the auberge the ambulance flag still hung out, and a wounded French officer occupied the next room to us, an unmistakeable hospital odour pervading the whole house.

We felt as if, being non-combatants, we were unjustifiably where we were, as we evidently, though unintentionally, inconvenienced others.

The landlady of the auberge, a wretched and overworked little woman, on the Commandant telling her to find us a room, became very loud in her remonstrances. She had, she said, but three rooms (not counting the wounded officer's) in which she could put us. In one, all the officers dined, and afterwards a sick son and his attendant slept. In another, she and her family lived, and in the third (the kitchen) some soldiers had just been billeted. The Commandant first looked about to see with his own eyes if it were true, and then insisted upon changing the soldiers' billet, and the family moving down stairs gave us up their room.

Four subaltern officers, the captain, and an assistant-surgeon, sat down to dinner with us. One of the subalterns had just come from a University and was dubbed "Professor" by the rest,—a nick-name which amused us, as it is so common a one,

applied for much the same reasons in our own service. "The Professor will tell you," was generally the reply of one of the others when some question was put which he felt himself unable to answer, and from the Professor and others we gained a good deal of information about the German soldiers and the war.

The pay of the infantry privates in their army left them, they told us, (after all deductions,) about threepence or fourpence a day. They had but one regular meal each day, and nothing but water allowed as a drink—we mean by this, allowed by the State—and they carried a weight upon the march of about sixty pounds.

With regard to the impossibility which it was formerly the fashion to prophesy, of restraining men when using breech-loaders from firing away too rapidly all their ammunition, they said that they could completely control this, and that in practice it had not been found any drawback to the breech-loader. Evidently the detachment there was looking ahead to the prospect of having to huddle itself in the cold weather, for they were already taking the windows and sashes out of all the abandoned French houses, with the view of using them for huts. They did not, however, it was told us, despoil in this way any buildings whose owners had remained in them, but anything in a deserted house they took, if they wanted it.

The telegraph wires it had been found at first difficult to preserve, but, after two or three peasants had been hung, they were left unmolested.

Our night at Conflans cannot be described as a very pleasant one, for our quarters were the complete reverse of inviting, but we slept soundly nevertheless, and the following morning took a stroll through the village with Capt. B——. Two or three of the villagers surrounded him at once, with complaints such as that wheat had been taken from them for some horses, and so on, and to all these he listened patiently enough, though for most of them he could offer but little redress. "The horses must be fed," he said, "and if oats are not provided, why I must take wheat."

With what a torrent of shrill sound a French woman, when excited, can pour out her words ; and though we sincerely pitied the people of this and all the other French villages suffering from the war, we felt some little sympathy with Capt. B——, when, after listening for three or four minutes, he said to one of these, in bad French, “ Parlez lentement, Badame. Je ne comprends un mot, Badame ; vous parlez comme un moulin à vent.”

In passing the market place, we saw printed in conspicuous characters that “ Anybody found carrying arms, who did not belong to regularly organized corps, should be shot,”—a notice aimed, of course, at the Franc-tireurs, who were now becoming a great thorn in the side of the Prussians. After our stroll we turned our attention to the question of how we should get on towards Metz, and in our endeavour, assisted by Capt. B., to settle it by obtaining a conveyance, we were present at a scene which would have amused us, if we had been able to look at the thing only in its ludicrous light.

We may say here that it was always our custom when we obtained waggons to pay for them at liberal rates, and to obtain for them a permit from the German authorities to return at once ; but the peasants had been so long unaccustomed to receive money in return for their services, and had so often been pressed away for days together, that it was not very easy to persuade them before starting that they would be paid, or in reality sent back. For these reasons it was occasionally difficult to procure conveyances, even with the aid of the Commandant, the peasants trying to dodge the requisitions as far as they possibly dare.

At Conflans this was the case ; the Mayor, on being sent for, affirmed positively that there was no conveyance, and that it was *impossible* to get one. He was told, “ Mais, Monsieur le Maire, il n’y a pas d’ impossible. Il le faut,” and while he was gently invited to try in one direction, the Commandant walked with us to try in another. Still it was in vain at first that we sought for a waggon ; everything that was ferreted out had

something smashed about it and was not available. At last, a tall sergeant came up and whispered with a grin that he had seen a good light trap the evening before in the garden of a house close by, and volunteered to guide us to it. The trap was found, but the wheels were all gone, hidden, the sergeant said, by the sly owners." "Sie sind so schlau," (They are so sly,) was his indignant exclamation. The owner contended, with an odd sort of logic, that as one of the wheels had been broken, he had been obliged to send all for repair; but on being cross-examined as to this assertion, he became confused in his statements. A short examination of the premises now took place, but failed to produce the wheels, and we were beginning to wonder whether we should have to interfere, and try and save the waggoner from the German anger, and also when our own waggon troubles were to end, when a find elsewhere was reported. Away we went to look at it, and springless and bad as it was, we voted it a treasure. An old grey horse was harnessed to it by all sorts of extraordinary straps and strings, a thin rope was made to do duty for reins, and then an ancient-looking, toothless peasant clambered up, and we were ready to start. The Commandant had proposed sending a soldier with us, but as it was a matter of impossibility to squeeze more than three into the vehicle, we set off without him, feeling that one man could hardly be much protection to us in case of meeting any chance Fraac-tireur—the possible bogie whom we had to dread.

Our journey at first was a very slow one. Hitherto our animals had all been too tired to be troublesome, but this beast was an exception, and carried us by a sudden dash so nearly over the edge of a steep precipice, that we both jumped out, fortunately lighting on our feet. To make a long story short, we were much relieved when, with hands out by the rope reins (for we took to driving ourselves), we reached Gravelotte, *via* Doucourt, having had many anxious moments on the road, and slaves of going over embankments, and into poplar trees and German detachments; for as we continued on our route we were passed at

frequent intervals by parties of infantry and cavalry, the latter generally escorting supplies.

While approaching Gravelotte our attention was attracted by a group of German soldiers staring and pointing upwards, and following the direction of their gaze we saw a balloon high in air, evidently just come out of Metz, now about twelve miles distant, and sailing along under a fair wind towards Paris. It was far out of shot, so that no attempt was made to molest it.

Arrived at Gravelotte itself, which is only about four miles from the fort of Mont St. Quentin, and the French outposts around Metz, the number of troops that we met increased. Rifles were piled and guns parked near the village, and cavalry troopers in twos and threes moved over the fields to the left of the road, clearly links in the chain which Prince Frederick Charles had drawn around Marshal Bazaine and his army, cooped up in their stronghold. Not very far from the entrance of the village, and to the left hand, the blackened walls of what was once the farm house of Malmaison, bore evidence to the effect of the French shells which were poured into it, and its garden, held by the Germans, on the morning of the 18th of August.

We had no time to give more than a short two hours to the field of Gravelotte, for it was necessary for us to reach Corny, some miles off, by a country road, which was sure to be blocked up pretty well by German convoys, and to find our quarters there before night-fall. Still, in that two hours, we saw a great deal of the scene of the struggle at and around the village. First of all we bent our steps eastward along the Metz road, to the point where it crosses the ravine running between the Bois des Ognons and Bois de Vaux towards Ais, the further bank of which was the scene of the desperate assault of the Germans against the French left, protected by Mitrailleurs placed behind entrenchments, tier above tier, upon the slope. Passing along this road, raised high over the ravine, the German cavalry was mown down as it endeavoured to charge across it and reach the French position on the other side. One can imagine no attempt

in war of a much more desperate nature than the advance of infantry and cavalry over such ground (the cavalry necessarily confined to the road itself) against an enemy's batteries massed on the opposing wooded heights; and that the Germans were successful here and at other spots, such as Spiecheren, would, if no other proof were forthcoming, stamp them as soldiers as daring and excellent in attack as troops can well be.

Returning through Gravelotte we walked over the plateau which lies to the south of the village between the Rezonville road and the thick woods of the Bois des Ognons and Bois de Vaux. Across this plateau, now worn completely bare of grass or cultivation, the columns of the 1st Army Corps moved to the attack of Gravelotte and the position beyond. An eye-witness of the battle describes the Bois des Ognons as appearing on the afternoon of the 18th to hold all Germany, and the dark German columns as winding out of it like huge snakes, which were cut in pieces by the French Mitrailleurs, but, always joining together again, glided ever onwards towards Gravelotte and the ravine beyond. Fragments of shells, bullets, remnants of accoutrements, and mounds of earth surmounted by the rough wooden cross, marked the spots where many had fought and fallen in the fight; and near the north-west corner of the Bois des Ognons,—just where the ground slopes sharply down to a valley and a country road winds up close to the trees,—the little heaps of Mitrailleur cartridge holders showed the position of a French battery, the spot being one from which a clear range could be had towards Rezonville.

From this point we struck into the Rezonville Road, and returned by it to Gravelotte. All along this road the tall poplar trees had been cut down at intervals (usually every alternate tree) to give range to the French guns. The houses of the village on the side towards Rezonville were loop-holed, and so were the stone walls enclosing the gardens and fields, but, as at Bazeilles, no communication between houses to assist street fighting had been made. One of the walls on the south side of

the village, and which flanked the plateau over which the Germans must have moved from the Bois des Ognans, afforded an interesting example of rough loop-holing. It was not a high wall, perhaps less than five feet high, but was pierced with two tiers of loop-holes by simply knocking out the stones. The loop-holes of the lower tier were not directly under those of the upper, but one of them (speaking roughly) was placed underneath the centre of the space between two upper ones, thus, $\left[\begin{array}{cccc} \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\ & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \end{array} \right] \cdot$

This seemed to us a good practical way of combining a large number of loop-holes with convenience of firing in a wall too low to admit of the stereotyped method of two tiers of loop-holes, one above the other, with a platform for the upper rank of men to stand on.

All the men firing could do so unseen, and the wall was not much weakened.

The troops passing over the plateau under musketry and mitrailleuse fire ought to have found it (as it seemed to us) more difficult even than they did to carry the village and press on to the position beyond.

The village was comparatively little damaged by shells. The whole of the country around Gravelotte, with the exception of the sides of the deeply-wooded ravine where the French left rested, is of a gentle undulating character, passable, generally speaking, for all arms, but covered here and there with large belts of thickish wood. The French left resting as it did on the wooded hill side, might, we should imagine, have been made almost impregnable if the American system of felling the trees to form breastworks (although these trees are not so favorable for this as American fir trees,) had been resorted to.

Leaving Gravelotte between one and two o'clock, we drove down a winding and steep road along the densely-wooded valley of the Moselle to Ars. From Ars we drove to Noveant, where we crossed the Moselle, about eighty yards wide and with a dry bed, by a suspension bridge, and soon found ourselves in Corny,

the head-quarters of Prince Frederick Charles. The rich wooded scenery between Gravelotte and Corny is of peculiar beauty, and we should look forward with great pleasure to the prospect of seeing it again in times of peace. To-day heavy clouds of dust, partially obscuring the view, hung in the air, raised by convoy after convoy of supplies, and by troop after troop of foot and horse, the incessant stream of which gave to us some faint idea of what the presence of such a vast body of soldiers really implied: and it was only after frequent halts, during which we choked patiently by the hot road sides to let the columns pour on, that we reached our destination as the day was drawing to a close.

There was apparently but little excitement in Corny that day, but yet Marshall Bazaine had made upon it one of his few efforts to disturb the German beleaguering army.

A sortie had been made on a point of the German circle some distance from Corny towards Peltre, Meray-le-Haut, and Colombey, which had been repulsed, the Germans burning these villages after they had defeated the enemy.

Perhaps nothing could give a better idea of the magnitude of the German lines than the fact that we were unaware of the sortie until the following morning, and as it was not mentioned by any one in conversation, we believe that (with the exception, of course, of those at head-quarters,) no one at Corny was better informed about it than ourselves.

We soon found that to obtain quarters here would be a difficult matter indeed. Every corner of the place was occupied by soldiers, and in the general squeezing, crushing, and scarcity of all the comforts of life that prevailed, civility seemed to be at a discount; a cold "No," was all we could at first get to our request for a lodging, and after several efforts to obtain one, we at last thought ourselves in extreme luck, because we secured the free use of the floor of the tap room of a little auberge, absolutely swarming with flies, and where the field post of one of the army corps was established. We ought to say the free use of it after 10 p.m., for up to that hour the room was filled by soldiers, who

sat drinking and talking with great quietness and order at the little tables, until the bugles summoned them to their billets. As for a room to ourselves, or a bed anywhere, such a thing was not to be had for money, and eatables were almost as unobtainable.

We managed to get a little chocolate and bread, but meat was not to be procured, and eggs, the landlady told us, were so scarce, that even these not over fresh sold for fourpence apiece.

To get a waggon, or any species of conveyance, or horse, would be, we were informed, an utter impossibility; so we came to an arrangement by which our driver was given an official permission to take us on a stage further next day, he himself unwillingly agreeing to it, as we had paid him already a fair sum, and the authority of the permit set his mind at rest.

How it must wear the heart out of a human being to have to toil from morning until night, as the poor landlady of this auberge had, for those who are at deadly strife with one's husband and children, and nearest and dearest friends. One of her sons, she told us, was shut up in Metz, whence the cannonading could be heard almost daily. Another was in Paris, and her husband was fighting in some third portion of France.

Certainly this poor soul was given little time to think over her woes, for there was no rest in Corny for the auberge keepers, and, perhaps, all the happier for them.

During the evening we wandered up to the billet of one of the officers of the Head-quarter Staff, to whom our hosts at Eix had given us a letter, asking him to get permission for us to travel by the railway from Courcelles towards Saarbrück. This we obtained, as well as fresh instructions as to how we could best see Metz the following morning; and then after a stroll through the village streets, and past the large white chateau where the band of the Guards was playing opposite Prince Frederick Charles' head-quarters, we went back again to the auberge, and sat listening to the conversation of the soldiers as they talked and smoked at the tables.

There was no noisy argument among these soldiers, still less any pot-house wrangling or drunkenness through the evening. In fact, from all we saw of the German private soldiers on this trip, we should put them down as being generally a very well-behaved set of men, though we do not doubt that many isolated instances of brutality and crime may be brought against them.

After they had gone out the landlady brought us a mattress to place on the floor, and having opened the windows, to let in the fresh air and to let out the close smoky atmosphere, we lay down for the night, our driver luxuriously occupying the top of a billiard table in the same apartment.

The next morning, after a rather uncomfortable night of it, we were up betimes, and at 6 a. m. were climbing the hill of St. Blaise, from which we knew that Metz could be distinctly seen. That disappointment so often experienced by those who look forward to mountain views was in store for us now. When we reached the summit we could see no further than a few hundred yards. A field battery of twelve pounders placed behind a stone wall, covered over and heightened with earth, and revetted with fascines, lay close at our feet in readiness to repel sorties.

On our right was a small sort of farm house, with an enclosure, admission to which, by a recent order posted up on the wall, was stringently forbidden to all but the Head-quarters Staff, for whose use a large telescope had been erected within its precincts. To our left stood an old ruined tower, but below a dense fog hung in the air, obscuring everything from view. Some German artillerymen, seeing we were strangers, entered into conversation with us, and told us that the mist did not rise generally before 10 a. m., so that down we went again to Corny, and after having breakfasted returned once more to the hill. If we had suffered some little disappointment on our earlier journey, we were at all events repaid for it by the glorious panorama which burst upon us on our second visit.

Metz, with its Cathedral spires glittering in the morning sun,

lay beneath us, and the river Moselle could be traced in many points of its course as it wound round and through the town. Fort St. Quentin stood out prominently towards our left front; to our right rose the smoke of the burning woods and villages of Colombey, Peltre and Mercy le Haut, which had been the scenes of the sortie of the day before. The many dips and hollows visible from the height were filled with the dark-coated German troops as far as the eye could reach, and with a glass at one point some advanced sentries of both French and Germans could be seen running quickly from fence to fence, and then crouching down, apparently skirmishing with one another, while away from the other side of Metz the deadened reports of the guns of St. Julien strack at intervals upon the ear.

We have said that at Corny the people seemingly knew absolutely nothing of the last sortie, but now one of the artillerymen on the hill pointed us out the burning villages, saying that there had been fighting there on the previous day, and drew our attention also to the French and German sentries we have described, who were, it seems, stalking each other for the "fun (as he explained it to us with a laugh) of obtaining a shot."

Since we gazed upon these rising columns of smoke and watched these sentinels, two books have been published, from which we hope we may be forgiven for quoting extracts. One is called "The Fall of Metz," by Mr. G. T. Robinson, an Englishman shut up in the town throughout the siege; the other, "What I saw of the War," by the Hon. C. Allanson Winn.

Until we read these extracts we had no idea of the very ruthless nature of the struggle for the villages, whose smoking ruins we saw, and within three miles of which we passed that afternoon, or of the tiger-like thirst for blood which by degrees had taken hold of both armies. We doubt if in any of the wars of previous times more savage things in the way of fire and sword have been enacted than have taken place in this one, and (from these extracts seemingly) around Metz.

Mr. Robinson says, that on the 27th September (the day we

arrived at Corny) it was determined to make a reconnaissance in force from Metz towards Peltre, Colombey, Mercy le Haut, and other points, and to endeavour during it to destroy a German depot of provisions at the Peltre railway station, and bring in what cattle, grain, &c., could be got there to Metz.

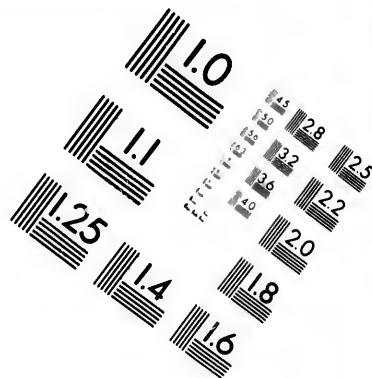
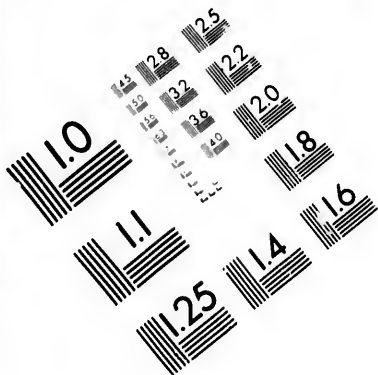
This sortie was so far successful that the railway station at Peltre was reached, the provisions secured, and the German outposts driven in.

Mr. Robinson, who was a spectator of some portion of the fighting, thus describes it:—

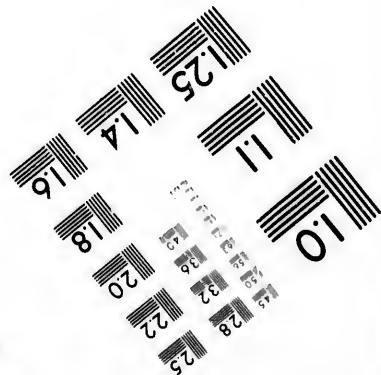
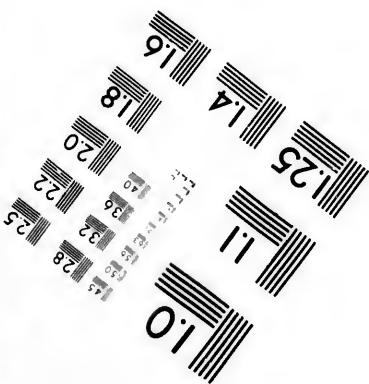
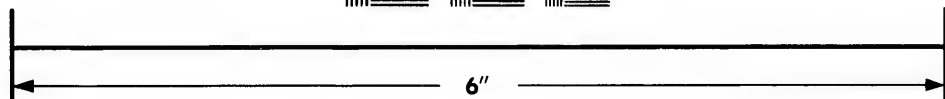
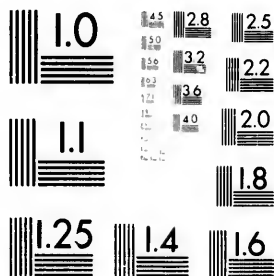
“Meanwhile another portion of our force pushes on rapidly to the village (Peltre), where, before the Prussians have recovered from their surprise, we are on them. They run to a convent—the convent of the Sisters of Providence it was called,—its walls are already loopholed; but under a deadly fire an entrance is forced, and now commences a horrible sight for those poor, peace-loving sisters. Their church was turned into a charnel-house, their very sanctuary was stained with blood, and the house of mercy became the house of vengeance, for there was no mercy there. *The Prussians crawled, the French gave no quarter, and flight there was none.*”

A similarly bloody and yet more barbarous scene is described as being carried on simultaneously at Mercy le Haut.

“The Prussians have since our last visit turned it into a fortress. The windows are boarded up and loopholed, and they have constructed an abattis of trees in front of the chateau. They are soon driven out of the first line of fallen trees, and then comes the attack upon the house itself. Doors are smashed in, the wooden protection of the windows cut to pieces, and, with a shout of ‘*Vive la France!*’ at them rushed the soldiers. It is vengeance now, the quick blood of the Frenchman is on fire, and the dogged resistance of the Teuton rendered more determined than before. Each room on the ground floor is a slaughter-house, and as it is impossible to ascend the stair-case, and the garrison won’t yield, the infuriated soldiers heap up everything inflammable *and set fire to it.*”



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“ Good God! it is horrible to think what demons war makes men. Every despairing face that appears at the upper windows is shot at before the man who owns it has time to cry for quarter. The flames and the smoke mount upwards, higher and higher ascends the smoke, higher and higher leap the flames, taking death with them, and that that death may be a speedy one is the only mercy to be hoped for now at Mercey le Haut.”

“ And now all around us rise huge columns of smoke in the air, for the enemy is determined to burn up what we have left. The whole village of Peltre is in a blaze; the long forks of flame start up into dense smoke clouds, which roll over the valley, and all that day and all that night does it blaze away.

“ The Grange-aux-Bois is yet in flames, the wood and chateau of Colombey are burning, and as we retire the Prussians advance and burn La Maxe.

“ From this date until the Marshal began to treat definitely for the capitulation of the place, scarcely a day passed but that the investing forces set fire to some farm or some village, and the horizon was black by day and red by night from the smoke and fire of these barbarous incendiaries.”

The shooting down of sentries and videttes, with no especial object—that is, with no further military aim than that of killing the individual soldier—seems to have been thought an honourable exhibition of prowess by both sides.

In describing a street in Metz with its motley crowd of occupants, Mr. Robinson thus draws the picture of a French sentry-slayer, whose achievements we may privately doubt, but who was at all events held in great respect as a hero :—

“ Now occurs a gap, and from out of the midst of all this colour stepped a short, thick-set man. All raised their hats to him, many stepped up to him and exchanged a hurried word or two as he walked rapidly along with his swinging step. That was *Hitter*. His name almost tempts a pun. He achieved a reputation here by going out in front of the ‘avant postes’ and bringing down the Prussian videttes and sentries. This morning he shook his head rather mournfully. He had only killed

six during the night, and thought that a poor night's work. Good heavens! we *smile* at his discomfiture, so hardened does war make us. Six empty homes and six dead men were nothing to us then; and it was more with a pondering mind as to whether it is right to shoot down sentinels and 'avant postes' than with a horror at their death that I turned away. Murder and war seem too nearly allied here to be honourable."

Now for the Prussian proceedings, as told by the Hon. C. Allanson Winn:—

"Von Schmeling was most anxious to see the Vaux outposts (one of the outposts close to Metz). About 900 yards off was a little chapel situated in the corner of a vineyard sloping down the hill from Jussy. In this chapel two French soldiers were situated on fore-post duty. Presently we saw one of them walk quietly down through the vineyard to a tree which stood exactly in the middle of it. Returning to the picket, we suggested a way through the vines by which a couple of Prussians might easily get within shot of him when he tried to return to the chapel.

"Two men at once set out, and we soon lost sight of them in the bright green foliage. We now returned to the Scotch fir to *watch the development of the plot.*" We won't continue this story beyond saying that the Frenchman, having quietly picked a few apples off the tree, was on the point of returning, when two needle-gun bullets whizzed close past him, but missed, and that he then very wisely got behind the tree again, when these observers of the development of the plot retired, "feeling sure that the two Prussians would watch him until night, if necessary."

To most minds the killing of sentries (unless it is absolutely necessary, as a preliminary to some contemplated military operation, to get rid of them, when it is, of course, justifiable to surprise and kill them if they resist,) must seem, if not absolute murder, at all events exceedingly unchivalrous. No object of importance can be gained by it, and this has been very generally recognized in other wars.

One seems to have gone back during the last half-century, when one contrasts with the above the accounts given in Napier's History of the Peninsula War of the friendly way in which the outposts of the English and French armies fraternized in Spain, and also the stories of the good feeling with which interchanges of chaff, such as, "How are you, Yank?" and so on, occasionally went on between the troops of the North and South in the late War of Secession.

As we were upon the hill of St. Blaise a company of Poles from Prussian Poland marched up, and struck us very much by their fine figures and martial bearing. Generally, they had the very fair hair and light blue eyes which form the type of the Saxon race, and were above the ordinary height. This was the finest body of men we noticed in our travels, although the Germans, as a rule, are strong and large men.

About half-past eleven we went down the hill once more towards Corny, passing by many small vineyards, where the grapes were rotting upon the vines for want of hands to gather them, and were nearly at the foot, when cannon shot after cannon shot from a distance, and a long sort of cheer coming upon the air from the direction of Metz, sent us half-way up again for the third time.

Before we reached the summit, though, all firing had ceased; the sentry was pacing carelessly on his former beat. We could see the soldiers lounging about, evidently looking at nothing in particular, and so putting this temporary excitement down to a few shots at some rashly-exposed troops, we descended finally, and were soon afterwards driving towards Courcelles, the nearest German railway station to Metz now available, and from which the line was open to Saarbrück.

Our rough quarters and scanty food at Corny, and the uncertainty of whether for days anything stirring would occur to break the monotony of the blockade (there was never any bombardment of the works, which the Germans wished to keep intact for themselves) made us decide to stay no longer.

CHAPTER VII.

METZ TO BRUSSELS, VIA SAARBRÜCK.

OUR drive from Corny to Courcelles took us over some frightfully rough country roads, and through the villages of Fay, Cuvry, and Fleury (the latter village less than three miles from the scene of the previous day's bloody affair at Peltre), and so across the high road connecting Metz and Strasbourg to Courcelles. The whole of the villages along our route were occupied by German soldiers, who seemed to swarm like locusts over the entire country. As you passed by the bivouac of a regiment of infantry, you came to the picketed horses of cavalry, and then to the parked guns of the artillery, and so on throughout the whole dusty drive.

The eye became wearied of gazing upon these symbols of war, and longed to have something new upon which to rest.

No white tents added beauty to this large encampment of men; and one thing is worthy of remark, that not one single tent, except a large open one erected over some stores, did we see on the trip we have been writing about. Rough huts hastily constructed from boughs of trees, formed stables for the horses, and sometimes shelter for the men, but the latter, when not in the villages, always bivouacked in the open, with no canvas to cover them, and had to construct natural shelter as best they could.

Our papers were examined at every village along the road, but we were detained nowhere, and arrived with a jaded and half-famished horse at Courcelles, a straggling uninviting-looking village, about 5 p. m. At no point had we been able to get a feed for our overworked beast, though the "Market-tenderins" (*Cantinières*) of the troops had supplied us once or twice with

bread and country wine for ourselves ; and now at Courcelles it was evident that not a grain of corn was to be had at the small inns. Courcelles had been converted, by building sheds, &c., into a large provision depôt for the army, and it made it all the more tantalizing to see in the open railway station sacks upon sacks of oats piled up, and which one could not touch.

After half-an-hour's exploration, we found also that no lodgings or any sort of cover, except the open railway shed, was to be had ; and our faces became blank when we were told by the ticket issuer, who being overworked was not over civil, that no train would go before 8. 15. upon the following morning.

But often, when things appear at the worst, the time of improvement begins, and it was so in our case. A good-natured station master, upon hearing our wants, allowed our driver to collect a large sackful of oats from the scattered grains strewn about the yard ; and we were also delighted by the news that a train was unexpectedly to go off in a few moments, in which we might find a place.

After seeing our driver walk off with his sack, we contrived to stow ourselves, with half-a-dozen others, in one of the trucks of this train, and were soon on our way to Saarbrück, where we arrived, viâ Forbach, before midnight.

Saarbrück appeared to be an early closing town ; not a single hotel was open at that hour ; and we were meditating a return to the railway station (after vain attempts to obtain entrance in many quarters), when a man whom we spoke to in a small restaurant, offered us a lodging at his father's house. To go with a perfect stranger to a dirty little house in a side street of a large town, to pass the night there, is not what one finds an agreeable, or would deem, generally, a wise thing ; and as our host, after piloting us to our abode, knocked at its door, and it was opened, after two or three enquires of " Who's there?" by a slatternly-looking old woman, we had some misgivings as to whether the railway station would not have been our best decision ; but we had by accident lit upon a good Samaritan ; slept very peacefully

upon two couches until the morning, and then shouldering our knapsacks, set off in search of a guide who would take us to see the scene of the assault of the famous heights of Spicheren.

This we soon found in the person of a private of the Landwehr, who had been in Saarbrück at the time of the battle, and to judge from the medals upon his breast had seen several former campaigns. He told us, though, with a sort of candour and want of tendency to brag which one does not often enough meet with, that these had been gained by very slight services, and that he had never been in any general action.

Under his pilotage we crossed the stone bridge over the Saar, a sluggish and deep river, about 50 yards wide, and out along the road, over which the Germans drove the French from the town on the 6th of August. As one crosses the bridge, the heights upon which the Prince Imperial received his "baptism of fire" are in full view; and beyond it, after the town has been cleared, rise on each side the terraced grassy heights, dotted with houses, across which the French skirmishers retired fighting out of the place.

Soon after this, one passes up the hill at the top of which was the first French position at Saarbrück, which was held by them shortly before this battle, but at which no fighting of consequence occurred. This hill is smooth, perhaps 100 feet in height, and of a slope of nearly 15 degrees. Along its crest was a breastwork over which the guns had fired. The earth had been taken from a ditch, about four feet wide, cut in front, and shelter pits for the gunners were made behind.

Between this trench and the main position of the Spicheren heights, stretches for a mile or so a long undulating grassy plain, across which runs the French and German boundary line, and which is entirely commanded by the heights beyond. Across this plain the German soldiers had to advance, continually under fire, and gaining no shelter except from the slightly undulating nature of the ground until they arrived pretty close under the Spicheren height itself. For the last half-mile of the advance,

our guide told us, the loss was comparatively small, as the French guns had to be depressed a good deal, and the shells, probably fired with too much haste, went over the heads of the assailants.

The hill or heights of Spieheren will always be pointed to as one of the most formidable positions ever attacked and carried in front, since the days of artillery and fire arms.

It is very steep, about 25 degrees, perhaps, in slope, and 150 feet, as far as we could judge, above the plain.

To climb up its side, which is smooth and grassy, except in a few places, was an exertion, and so to carry it in face of a rifle fire from a trench along its summit, and after a long advance exposed to artillery, can be understood to have been a very exceptional feat of arms.

It does not detract from the German bravery to say that the French may be said to have retired before the forces which were turning the height on the right at the same time, and not before those advancing to their front.

The wood on the *French* right of the position was traversed by the German troops, and the appearance of the latter through it, and on their right flank, naturally made the French unsteady.

If a failure had occurred in the attack made directly over a wide plain, and under such a fire, and against such a position as this, the order for it would have been termed madness, but yet the determined character of the advance had its effect in drawing off the attention of the French from the thick wood on their right, not sufficiently watched, and the fire from which upon their right flank caused their defeat.

From the top of the heights of Spieheren a very fine view can be seen towards Saarbrück, while in the opposite direction (to the south of Forbach) lies a stretch of level plain, over which, after the heights were carried, and the left as well as the right turned, the French retreated in headlong route.

Many crosses to the memory of officers who fell were to be seen on the hill slope, and in the valley, mounds of earth, with an occasional Prussian helmet placed upon a stick thrust into

them, marked the resting places of soldiers, but already (not two months after the battle) all traces of the fight, in the way of pieces of shells, accoutrements, &c., had been collected, and little boys moved about selling the chassepot and the needle bullets, and offering one relics at about as high a rate of profit, as those at Waterloo offer you the perhaps less genuine souvenirs of the fight that took place there more than half-a-century ago.

After an hour or two spent on the heights we returned to Saarbrück, and at the Hotel Brenner enjoyed the luxury of a good dinner, which one appreciates very decidedly after a day or two's rough fare.

In the evening we walked to the railway station (one of the few buildings, by the way, which bears the marks of the French very nominal bombardment), and left for Treves, where we slept; the next day reaching Brussels by way of Luxembourg, and shortly afterwards crossing the Channel to England.

In the train on our journey to Luxembourg, two English officers, whom we knew, entered our carriage, and with them a French lady, a Countess C——, who had a few days before been to Metz, with the hope of inducing Prince Frederick Charles to let her into the city, with a flag of truce, upon a visit of some special importance to her brother.

She was very kindly treated, she said, and at first permission was granted to her to go in blindfolded, but it was in the end withheld, on the ground of its being a precedent it would not do to create, and so she was travelling back disappointed. Besides the brother in Metz, she had a father shut up in Paris, and had lost three or four relations in the war. At a railway station some friend spoke to her, and we shall never forget the joy with which she turned to us, and told us of the successful sortie of the 27th (which we have before described), and which her narrator had magnified into a glorious victory for the army of Bazaine. "Now we shall win; we *must* win!" she exclaimed; and none of us had the heart to undeceive her, and dim her happiness before its time.

Our travels among the scenes of the war were now over, and so our stories about them cease. That these may have interested our readers as much as what we saw and experienced did us, we can hardly venture to hope.



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interested
did us, we

